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ABSTRACT

Because of the wide and continuing interest in a previous issue on techniques for teaching works by Shakespeare, this journal issue presents 19 additional articles on a broad range of Shakespeare related topics. Following an introduction, the titles of the articles and their authors are as follows: (1) "Making Changes/Making Sense" (Barbara Hodgdon); (2) "Using the BBC Shakespeare" (Robert G. Johnson); (3) "Shakespeare Anxiety" (Diana Rice); (4) "Teaching Shakespeare to the Undergraduate" (Sister Agnes Fleck); (5) "Teaching Critical Thinking through Shakespeare: 'Triumphs through Tragedies'" (Judy M. Gesch); (6) "An Innovative, Traditional, Successful Shakespeare Course" (Robert Burkhart); (7) "Need a Shakespeare Escape and Renewal? Visit Stratford, Ontario" (Judith Keck); (8) "Interesting the Uninitiated in Renaissance Love Sonnets" (Veena P. Kasbekar); (9) "It Was Greek to Me: Teaching Shakespeare to General Education Students" (Chris Boone-Grubbs); (10) "Methods and Madness: Why and How to Teach Shakespeare" (James E. Davis); (11) "Helping High School Students Examine the Complexities of 'Hamlet' through the Writing Process" (Dawn Holt Anderson and Karolyn Holm Burkett); (12) "Is The Study of 'Macbeth' in the Senior Year a 'Dagger of the Mind'?" (James Christopher Davis); (13) "The Teaching of Shakespeare: An Introductory Approach" (Patricia Scott); (14) "American Students and English Politics: The Case of Shakespeare's 'Henry IV Part I' (Hassell B. Sledd); (15) "Trying 'Hamlet'--Literally" (Georgianna Clark); (16) "To Sport Would Be As Tedious As To Work" (Sherry Bevins Darrell); (17) "Syllabus to Independence" (Ruth Ann Gerrard); (18) "Focus on Shakespeare: An Interview with Marye Kesslar" (Sharon Patrick); and (19) "Lesson Number One" (April Kotouch). (HTH)

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TEACHING SHAKESPEARE, II

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EMPHASES IN FUTURE ISSUES

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INTRODUCTION: Teaching Shakespeare, II

by
Ronald Ernesto Salomone

Nine years ago, Jim Davis devoted an entire number of FOCUS to "Teaching Shakespeare" (Spring 1976). It was a modest issue--eight articles on Shakespeare, plus a bibliography, a list of helpful materials, and other SOCTE matters--but over the years it has proven to be the single most popular issue in the history of the journal, with NCTE sales running well into the thousands. Just as noteworthy, perhaps, were the events leading up to the Shakespeare issue: a two-day SOCTE conference held at OU-Zanesville in celebration of Shakespeare's birthday and a four day trip to the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, Ontario.

Because of such a wide and continuing interest in the teaching of Shakespeare, we decided to repeat the theme of that early issue, and the results exceeded our most optimistic projections. What follows is a collection of nineteen articles on a broad range of topics including Sharon Patrick's delightful interview with Marye Kesslar, who chaired the Zanesville conference and directed the Stratford tour; an adaptation to a specific Shakespeare class of NCTE's Writing About Literature (Anderson and Burkett); a discussion of Shakespeare's sonnets (Kasbekar); thoughts about an interdisciplinary approach from a Comparative Arts instructor (Scott); directions to the Shakespeare Festival (Keck); suggestions for using the BBC Shakespeare tapes (Johnson); comments about anxiety in the Shakespeare classroom (Rice); general advice about "How and Why to Teach Shakespeare" (Jim Davis); and innovative approaches to a number of specific plays.

I cannot close without an expression of gratitute to James Cooper, who designed our cover in Professor Dennis Deane's Two-Dimension Design Class; to Agnes Hirsch, Bishop Flaget Middle School, for stencil production; and, again, to the staff of the OU-C Central Processing Center.

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Making Changes/Making Sense

by
Barbara Hodgdon

The question, asked by a student beginning a Shakespeare course, is familiar: "Have they translated it from that Old English stuff?" And the voice often speaks with some desperation. How can we respond to what students sense as a gap between Shakespeare's words (and texts) and their own? One strategy is to translate Shakespeare's words into everyday English--to undo, or deconstruct (in a special sense), that language so that it approaches ordinary discourse.[1] Another involves adapting or cutting Shakespeare's playtexts to simplify narrative and eliminate "verbal excess." Both represent changes in Shakespeare's texts--changes that make sense, in one way or another, of their complexities. But, although what follows does outline some teaching strategies for facing Shakespeare's words head-on as well as for cutting one particular play--Hamlet--apart, my title refers to two other kinds of change: changes in my own teaching and changes in my students' minds.

At some point, if we're honest with ourselves, we acknowledge a schizophrenic schism between theory and practice, between the ways we talk of Shakespeare's playtexts in essays and books and the strategies or methodologies we use for teaching those texts in the classroom. We are involved in two different discourses, and one often, though not always, works against the other. That is, in essays, we tend to choose a particular critical methodology--say, New Criticism or structural ism or deconstsruction--and, using that construct, assert a position and prove it, selectively discussing only some parts of a playtext--a particular narrative strategy, a particular character's role, the function of particular elements of language, a particular nexus of contradiction. If we transfer this method to the classroom, it results in the lecture. Lecturing tempts me for two reasons. I can lead students through a text my way, letting them see what I see--at best, know what I know. Moreover, lecturing gives students a well-put-together construct from which they can take notes. But if I lecture, I am simply proving to my students what they already suspect: that Shakespeare is hard to read and that I can do what I have been trained to do--reveal Shakespeare's hidden, deeper, secret meanings, uncover the mysteries of what my students sometimes view as semi-sacred texts (texts which, like other sacred texts, are not meant to be questioned). Lecturing

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does, however, feed my ego and produce the illusion of comfort: both it and my students' class notes constitute black-and-white proof that they are "learning" Shakespeare. But someone (me) is doing their understanding (a rather subversive word, understanding) for them. And when my students ask questions, they usually address my interpretation, not the playtext. My lecture (and my students' lecture notes) sets up a secondary text that replaces (or displaces) one text--Shakespeare's play--with another. This acts as a barrier between my students and the playtext: it does not invite them to be entertained by or to entertain Shakespeare's playtexts, both in the sense of "enjoy" and in the stricter sense of "maintain" or hold sense together in enjoyable ways."

The first obstacle to both of these senses of enjoyment is Shakespeare's language. All the problems posed by Shakespeare's playtexts--for students, for teachers, for editors, textual scholars and bibliographers, for all kinds and types of critics, and for actors--begin with the words.[2] The language, as John Russell Brown noted long ago, is a trap.[2] And it is a particularly tender trap for students, most especially for those students driven by the impluse to please a teacher, to give her or him what she or he wants. What this means is that many students expect that I'll admire their ability to "really relate" to "Shakespeare's great poetry," a process which often carries the words away and substitutes for them notions of what I call "aboutness."

To counter these impluses and this process, my first-day strategy in a Shakespeare course is one Miriam Gilbert has made deservedly famous.[3] Called "What's Going On Here?", the exercise uses eight or nine bits of text, each illustrating a recurring kind of reader's problem--such as a character's first line, the sharing of a blank verse line between characters, the function of rhyme, the ordering of information within a speech, a speech or an exchange containing implied stage directions. Very briefly, let me illustrate how this exercise works, for its primary purpose is to introduce another time-honored teaching strategy: asking questions.

Perhaps one of the most instantly revelatory single lines to use in this opening exercise is Lady Capulet's first speech: "Nurse, where's my daughter? Call her forth to me?" (Romeo and Juliet I. iii.i). The first question I ask of this line is, What do these words, in this particular order, tell you about the speaker and about her relationship to her daughter and to the Nurse? Students often begin by saying that the speaker is accustomed to having servants do things for her, that she's used to giving orders. Others may note that she seems to expect instant action and that she doesn't say "please." Someone else remarks that the Nurse must be closer to the daughter than the mother, since, although the mother does not know where her daughter is, she assumes that the Nurse does know. This sets up another discovery: that the speaker refers to "my daughter" rather than calling her by name, to which someone usually responds by saying that the mother seems to see the daughter as a possession, not a person. By this time, one or two students will have recognized the line as Lady Capulet's and the play as Romeo and

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Juliet. And because most students know the story of the play, they are able to see how asking (and answering) these particular questions gives them information that builds into what they already know about the play and about the characters' behavior. The moment a student says, "But there's so much in just one line!", that student is beginning to change her mind about how to read a playtext (or any text). But more fundamentally, doing this exercise demonstrates to students that they can read Shakespeare and that there are no hidden, deeper, secret meanings, only multiple signals out of which readers can make sense. The exercise also, of course, introduces a reading method involving process: it reveals that one way to make sense of Shakespeare is to hold the text still by asking questions about it.

"What's Going On Here?" excites most students by involving them in detective work, but it also scares them. For now that they know how to read (or how I want them to read), that experience also discloses that the semester (line by line, 'til the crack of doom?) begins to look like forever. One way to counter this assumption, I think, is to ask several students to read, say, the first sixty lines of Romeo and Juliet--from the servants' dialogue up to the stage directions for the fight. I stress that they need not "act" and ask simply that they speak the lines clearly. Even with some inevitable stumblings, the group is usually surprised that this "cold" reading evokes a laugh or two and that it takes only three to four minutes. I then point out how easily the language "translates" into speech, how some registers of meaning come from hearing sounds and from listening, and, finally, how, even though the words disappear fast in performance, they are comprehensible. Momentarily, I think, this brief reading represents necessary reassurance. I then explain that we will be moving back and forth between these two ways of experiencing a playtext--as readers and as spectators--and that one objective of this course involves learning how to ask questions of a playtext from both points of view. Obviously, just as I am talking about a particular kind of reading process--one more similar to an actor's exploration of text in the rehearsal process than to a critical essay--I am also talking about particular sorts of questions.

Most students, I think, find it difficult to ask questions of a text--any text, not just Shakespeare's texts. First of all, many students tend to read questioning as an admission of ignorance. Secondly, students know a lot about asking the kinds of questions they think "English teachers" want to hear them ask--the kinds of questions we sometimes do ask, and which many students assume are the only kinds of questions that can be asked of a text. So, when I require classes to hand in their questions on the first day we begin a play, questions such as these appear: "What is Shakespeare saying about love in A Midsummer Night's Dream?" Or, "How does Shakespeare reveal the theme of evil in Macbeth (or the theme of madness in Hamlet)?"I would argue that these are bad questions--not so much because they assume an autobiographical fallacy or because they imply authorial autonomy and an inviolate canon (each of which is a good reason for critiquing them)--but because they imply their own answers, because they limit rather than expand options and because they

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encourage summary (what I called, earlier, "aboutness") as a means of making sense.

Furthermore, questions like these provide open invitations to kick free of the text and to indluge in a kind of contemporary allegorizing that leads all too quickly to abstracts. One can then discuss King Lear as a play about sight and blindness, read Macbeth as a study of an evil tyrant or, as in the epigraph to Laurence Olivier's film, interpret Hamlet as a play about a man who cannot make up his mind. These statements slot each text into a neat file-card category; reduced to this size, both play and character can slip easily into the skinniest hip-pocket. To be sure, such capsulized versions represent evidence that the plays have stimulated thought, catalyzed mental operations. In this new form, the texts are certainly not on the page any longer--and that means that they have been changed. But is this the kind of change--or transformation of a text into something other than a text--that we want? I don't think so.

Going beyond "What's Going On Here?", we can, I think, counter this sort of change by inviting students to ask questions that will open up, not close down, a playtext's meanings. In what follows, I describe a strategy for teaching Hamlet that uses questioning--in a sense, one of the subjects both of the play and its criticism.[4]

This assignment, like most, has a history. It began when I read Grigori Kozintsev's Shakespeare: Time and Conscience. There, addressing some general problems with filming Shakespeare, Kozintsev remarks that the soliloquies are totally superfluous cinematically. Thinking about how to translate such moments to film, he saw nothing but giant close-ups; although he felt he could not cut them, he also sensed that the characters' actions were clearly defined without them.[5] Much filmed Shakespeare does indeed stop dead on the soliloquies to show us faces in close-up, but is it true that the characters' actions are clearly defined without them? What about Richard III's "Now is the winter of our discontent?" What about Juliet's "Gallop, apace?" What about Macbeth's "If 'twere done, then 'twere well it were done quickly?" What about Hamlet? What are all those soliloquies doing there? Why are there so many of them? What, if any, form of progression do they represent? Are they necessary to the narrative? Or are they, like some of the song and dance numbers in musical comedy, digressions? Are soliloquies a particular kind of verbal spectacle? Star turns for actors? Front-curtain numbers? What is a soliloquy, anyway, and how does it work?

The assignment that addresses these questions involves changing Shakespeare's text. I call it "De-Familiarizing Hamlet"--deconstructing the play, if you will, and reconstructing it. The exercise has four parts. Originally, I asked students to complete all four parts over a weekend and come to class prepared to share their findings. Since then, I have broken the assignment into several parts, but I believe that doing the entire exercise all at once is most effective, not only because it gets at one of the major problems of the play right away but also because it uncovers so many others that can then be addressed.

First, I ask students to read Hamlet, omitting all of Hamlet's soliloquies. Those unfamiliar or familiar with the play; those who know that Hamlet is a character who talks to himself (or to the audience); those who simply know, as most seem to, that "To be or not to be, that is the question" comes from this play: all are immediately placed in a position where the play lacks one of its most distinguishing features--one element that, in the view of many, makes Hamlet Hamlet. After students have read the play without the soliloquies, I ask them to write a paragraph or so addressing these questions: Is the story clear? Do you understand what is happening, both in the narrative and with the character called Hamlet? If so, explain the dimensions of that understanding. But if you sense that you're missing some clues or information, what do you need or what to know in order to have a more complete understanding? Writing responses to these questions is important, for writing requires students to clarify, quantify and qualify their ideas. Also, note that I ask students to address the questions I ask rather than to answer them. In explaining the assignment further, I say that I'm not looking for truncated "yes/no" answers but for an organized statement that articulates their questions and responses clearly. The advantage of this writing is that class discussion of the play can begin on a fairly sophisticated level, largely because students are working from thought-out responses to a specific problem. Not incidentally, I am inviting students to do something that Hamlet himself does--write down his thoughts in order to remind himself of what it is he must remember. But only occasionally will someone anticipate this equation. Everyone, however, discovers--and registers the excitement of that discovery in writing--that Hamlet is perfectly understandable without all those troubling long speeches. The most wary (usually those who have read the play before) conclude that although Hamlet himself seems strange and a bit rash, "things are pretty clear." But they do want to know more about what he is thinking and feeling. And they do want particular sorts of answers. Here is a range of usual questions: What is the full story behind Hamlet's mother, his uncle and his dead father? Why does he overreact to the Ghost? What motivates Hamlet: is it just revenge? Why these violent shifts of mood? Is he emotionally fit to revenge? Or to do anything? When, exactly, is Hamlet mad? Why does he hide his love for Ophelia? Why does the play-within-the-play happen? Why doesn't he kill the king when he's praying?[6]

But the primary revelation here is that the other characters--and other regions of the play--leap into sharp focus, especially Gertrude, Claudius, and Ophelia. Most readers, for example, can easily generate some sympathy for Claudius; some recognize that this happens, in part, because his soliloquy is still in place. One student remarked: "And then the shock of the last scene, with his corruption and coldness, gives an extra punch in the gut." Others become aware of the doubled families; one noted that the play "seemed like a political mystery." This awareness of elements other than Hamlet himself is, of course, especially striking for those who are not new to the play: they can begin to see the character Hamlet as just one part of a larger pattern, a play that might have an alternative title, say Hamlet and Ophelia, or Much Ado in Denmark or The Two Fathers of Denmark. All three titles incidentally, came unsolicited from students'

papers: each--or the three together--might form the kernel of a class hour that examines how the play that might be called Hamlet and Ophelia shares elements with the other "couple" plays, Romeo and Juliet, Troilus and Cressida and Antony and Cleopatra, as well as how it differs from them, or from Much Ado About Nothing.

The third part of the assignment is to reread the play, including the omitted sections. This has a tricky pay-off built in: since it requires a twice-over reading of the play, it means that students come to class much more prepared to manipulate the whole playtext than they do if they've given it the usual once-around reading. Again, I ask that they write a paragraph or so addressing a series of questions: How do the omitted sections work--that is, what sorts of information do they supply? Do they provide the understanding you felt you wanted earlier? The polar response here, of course, is that Hamlet's soliloquies don't supply anything. For nearly all the information provided in the soliloquies is repeated elsewhere, usually at a point fairly close to the speech itself. Since they do not represent new or essential plot knowledge, eliminating them does not mar the narrative. One of the most fluid opening responses to this part of the assignment was the following: "When you put the soliloquies back in, the story gains body." And my query, in class, was "Whose body, exactly?" Another student saw the play as "cool, calm and collected" without the soliloquies, which he viewed as self-indulgent. Yet another described them as "like a hidden thread"; while someone else labeled them an inner narrative--one of mental, not physical, activity. Such responses lay the ground for probing how soliloquy seems to function, in this play as well as others, as a structural guide to the narrative, from one character's point of view. And this, I think, makes students feel, at least momentarily, in control of Hamlet.

But tangential to this response is another discovery: that although the soliloquies do tell us what Hamlet is thinking and feeling and something of what he plans to do and why he plans to do it, they do not address the questions most students want answers for: explanations for the Gertrude-Claudius-Old Hamlet triangle, for Hamlet's madness, for his treatment of Ophelia, for his violent shifts of mood. Students find themselves, now, slightly more uncomfortable; although Hamlet says quite a bit above love, hate, murder, revenge, cowardice, suicide, action, and delay, he provides no answers either to our questions or to his own. In fact, the way he addresses these questions is disappointing, even conventional: he turns out to be, to some students as to Charles Marowitz, a very shallow and boring fellow indeed. Alert students will often discover that I have placed them exactly in Hamlet's position--forcing them to ask, and attempt to answer, questions. Some will recognize that Hamlet seeks answers for unanswerable, "ultimate" questions and will reflect that, although the soliloquies may drive them mad, they seem to keep Hamlet sane. For most, the soliloquies deepen their sense of the play as an elaborate trap (a mousetrap? I ask); they comment that the soliloquies give you the illusion that in sharing Hamlet's thought process, you understand that process. As one student put it, talking about his madness: "If the text gave me a definition of madness or sanity, I'd think it was a joke, and if Hamlet followed one of those definitions faithfully, I'd think he

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was a joke." "But," this student concluded, "I don't blame Shakespeare for making a brilliant cop-out; he only wanted paying customers."

Finally, I ask students to rank the six soliloquies according to their necessity--for Hamlet's understanding and for ours. Are these, I ask, similar or different? And although I ask that they justify their ordering, I stress that there is no right or wrong way of going about this but, rather, a range of possibilities. Then I invite them to speculate on why Act V contains no soliloquies and ask if they can identify a moment or moments where a soliloquy might be useful or appropriate, given their placement elsewhere.

Almost all students agree that "O what a rogue and peasant slave am I" (or at least a part of it, lines 575-591) is the most plot-necessary speech. This leads to listing other, similar soliloquies (or parts of soliloquies) in which Hamlet reveals his intentions and plans to us before he reveals them to others. Seeing that each of these speeches has multiple parts with multiple functions--passionate, contemplative, argumentative, accusatory--leads them, in turn, to another sort of restructuring, a rethinking of how smaller units of language within a speech work, for actors as well as for readers or spectators. As they continue to build on the earlier close work with language, students discover that the same questions with which the course began--Why do these particular words occur in this particular order, and what relationships or states of mind do they reveal?--constitute more than a useful introductory strategy but are, as one student put it, "some of the best questions to ask."

What amazes them, and some do not want to admit it, is that Hamlet's (and perhaps Shakespeare's) most famous words, "To be or not to be," introduce the least necessary--to us--of all the soliloquies. That it <u>seems</u> necessary to the character Hamlet, however, brings students to the point of exploring further the ways in which Hamlet is a stranger in his own play. One of the most telling comments of all came from a student's remarks on "How all occasions do inform against me." "Now," she said, "there will be no more beating around the bush. We and Hamlet know for sure what's coming next. Finally, the play is in full motion--it will be completed and revenge will be had." She went on to explain how she then realized that this was just another example of how the play traps us. When she recognized that, at this point, Hamlet's own delay shifts to the narrative, she expressed her frustration in a long and vituperative paragraph, detailing her annoyance with Hamlet. She concluded, "I couldn't believe it! What I finally <u>have a right to expect</u> doesn't happen: he goes off to England, and we don't see him for half an hour!"

Finally, the question of the absent fifth-Act soliloquy. Most students acutely observe that there are two places where such a speech would be most appropriate, and that at both the text substitutes something else: in the graveyard scene, as Hamlet contemplates Yorick's skull, and just after Osric has brought Laertes' challenge to Hamlet. In both situations, Horatio is there; Hamlet has someone to talk to, thus no soliloquy. Yet both have a "soliloquy feel," as one student remarked, going on to talk

of how Hamlet's language becomes less conditional and more definite, revealing changes in Hamlet's thought process. Such comments provide an opportunity to talk not only of how the text reveals that "new" Hamlet but also to return to other questions: how the play isolates Hamlet; how the roles of Horatio, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern counter and/or intensify that isolation. In fact the entire assignment operates not make questions disappear but to multiply them. Making changes in Hamlet, in other words, leads to making sense by asking questions of some of the sense-defying strategies of Shakespeare's playtext. And making these changes also leads students to discover that, although the play is a structure of knowledge, in some ways we never do find just one, or even several, answers for what it is we want to know about Hamlet.

What I have described illustsrates just one way to put students in a situation where they can make their own discoveries about a playtext. To be sure, they are mediated discoveries, since I have some notion of what they will find and because I have structured the discovery process. But some surprises always occur, for me as well as for those students who begin to enjoy--and entertain--the risks involved in giving up their desire for a comfortable, pat understanding of a playtext. A closing quote from a course evaluation summarizes one student's thoughts on these risks. "Now I know that by asking questions, I can understand what's going on in the text and that what a text means involves a kind of argument between me and the words--almost like another dialogue. My questions aren't always useful ones, but they're getting better, and I've also learned that it's all right not to be able to understand all of the text all of the time." Such responses may seem very elementary, but the ability to make such statements represents, I think, more than a starting point in the process of changing students' ways of thinking about making sense of--about entertaining-Shakespeare's playtexts.

De-Familiarizing Hamlet

What we'll be doing, for the next several meetings, might be described as cracking Hamlet open. This assignment has four parts; it requires reading, re-reading, and a bit of writing.

1. Read Hamlet, omitting the following sections. Cover them up, forget they're there, ignore them. If you have any preconceived notions about the content and "meanings" of these sections, try to erase them from your response. Act, scene and line references are to The Complete Pelican Shakespeare, ed. Alfred Harbage (New York: Viking Press, 1969).
   - I.ii.129-159: "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt...But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue."
   - I.v.92-112: "O all you host of heaven!...I haven't sworn't."
   - II.ii.533-591: "Ay, so, God bye to you..Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."
   - III.i.56-88: "To be or not to be...And lost the name of action."
   - III.iii.73-96: "Now might I do it pat...This physic but

prolongs my sickly days."
IV.iv.32-66: "How all occasions do inform against me...My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth."

2. Now, in a paragraph or so, address these questions. Do you understand what's happening--in the play and to (or with) the character called Hamlet? If so, explain as precisely as you can that understanding. But if you also sense that you're missing some clues or information, what do you need to know (or want to know) in order to have a fuller understanding? Please do this <u>before</u> you go on to section 3.

3. Reread the play, including the omitted sections.

4. Now, in another paragraph or so, address these questions. How do the omitted sections work? That is, what sorts of information do they supply? Do they affect the narrative? Do they provide the understanding you felt you wanted in section 2? What can you say about the functions of these bits of text? Rank the sections of text according to their necessity--for Hamlet's understanding and for ours. (Are these two understandings similar or different, by the way?) Which section seems most necessary? Which is least necessary? Briefly, justify your ordering.

Finally, why, in your opinion, are there no soliloquies in Act V? Can you identify moments where a soliloquy might be useful or appropriate, given their placement elsewhere? In those moments, what substitutes for soliloquy? And to what effect?

Notes

[1]Such "translated" editions are, of course available. See, for example, Hamlet, ed. John Richetti (Simon and Schuster, 1975); The Shakespeare Parallel Text Series.

[2]John Russell Brown, Shakespeare's Plays in Performance (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 19.

[3]Just as I have unashamedly plagiarized Professor Gilbert's opening-day strategy, she has used the Hamlet assignment I speak of here in her classes at The University of Iowa. My debt to her inventive teaching is a considerable one which I take pleasure in acknowledging.

[4]For just one example, see John Dover Wilson, What Happens in Hamlet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

[5]Grigori Kozintsev, Shakespeare: Time and Conscience, trans. Joyce Vining (London: Dennis Dobson, 1967).

[6]I am indebted to my Shakespeare students at Drake University, whose responses to this assignment I quote from here and in what follows.

[7]See Charles Marowitz, The Marowitz Hamlet (London: Penguin, 1968).

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USING THE BBC SHAKESPEARE

by
Robert C. Johnson

The Time-Life, BBC Shakespeare tapes have become an invaluable supplement for many teachers of Shakespeare. Although critics can argue about the relative merits of the individual productions, having the entire canon readily available on tape is a revolutionary development in the study of Shakespeare. I have found that on their own students will view the plays to aid them in understanding them. Showing selected scenes in class helps to generate discussion, and the opportunity to study carefully seldom-performed plays such as Titus Andronicus has been helpful in my own development as a teacher.

But I am most enthusiastic about using the BBC productions as the basis for a paper assignment in my undergraduate Shakespeare course. In the past the paper assignment had seemed to me to be the weakest part of the course. Committed to an outside paper in any literature course I teach, I had, however, long given up on the typical research or critical papers, finding that my students were overwhelmed and confused by the sheer volume of scholarship and critical opinion. Yet, more controlled assignments over carefully assigned readings had also produced mixed results, students occasionally demonstrating a creative grasp and understanding, but often simply revealing their confusion over a more limited body of readings.

Several years ago I invited my Shakespeare class to my house to watch Derek Jacobi's interpretation of Hamlet. We had finished our discussion of the play several weeks earlier, and so the students had developed their own understanding of the play. But their interpretations were challenged by Jacobi's provocative and brilliant performance and by Patrick Stewart's formidable portrayal of Claudius. The next day in class the students were eager to discuss the play once again, offering varied and often interesting comments on the performance and supporting their opinions with an excellent recall of the tape. What I sensed in their reaction to Jacobi's interpretation was a new confidence in their own opinions. Some of Jacobi's acting decisions were so controversial (especially the nunnery scene and the play within the play scene) that students could easily react to and argue for or against the interpretation.

Students debated such innovations as Jacobi's handling of the three questions to the ghost: "Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?" (I, iv, 57). Jacobi shouts the first two questions at the ghost of the elder Hamlet, but he pauses, turns to his companions, and asks them, not the ghost, "what should we do?" The ramifications of this change are important, and the student needs to examine whether this suggestion of vacillation, indecision, is an integral part of a consistent portrayal by Jacobi or simply an aberration, a distraction.

The next time I taught the Shakespeare course I decided to use the BBC Hamlet as a basis for the paper assignment. By then I had written an essay on this version (Patrick Stewart's Claudius," The Aligarh Journal of English Studies, 6(1981), No. 2, 148-157). I had argued that Stewart's brilliant performance firmly and consistently established Claudius as Hamlet's "mighty opposite." I was confident about my own understanding of this performance, and I was hopeful that my students could transfer their obvious enthusiasm for the Jacobi Hamlet to a cogent analysis of the total performance.

We first spent two weeks discussing the play before we watched the BBC tape. My assignment was general, an attempt to guide them to their own interpretation. My initial assignment follows:

English 373 Hamlet Paper

At the first level you are to approach this assignment as one might approach a review of the film for such a professional journal as Shakespeare on Film Newsletter. You are, then, a student of Shakespeare who has a specific reading of the play, and your interpretation of the play should be reinforced or challenged by the BBC version. You are writing to fellow students of the playwright who will also have somewhat set readings of the play or a limited aspect of the play; then you must deal with the specifics of the BBC production. The following suggestions are intended to help you focus your thoughts. It is up to you to develop a specific and cogent thesis.

1) Have you seen another version of Hamlet? You could compare and contrast the two versions.

2) Do the performances of the actors and actresses refute the arguement that there is a discontinuity of character. Look especially at Ophelia, Gertrude. Have your ideas about Ophelia, Gertrude, or Rosencrantz and Guildenstern changed after watching the play? Can you justify Gertrude's actions after the closet scene?

3) If you believe that Hamlet feigns madness, how well does Jacobi handle the madness motif? Does Jacobi present a changed Hamlet in Act V?

4) How effective is Jacobi as Hamlet or Patrick Stewart as Claudius? I caution you about the second question: I have a very strong prejudice in favor of Stewart. How effective are the other supporting actors and actresses?

5) You might want to read a critical essay on Hamlet and then discuss how this version supports or contradicts the author's interpretation.

6) There are some cuts in the performance. Are the cuttings judicious or are some important parts missing?

7) Read Dover Wilson on the play within the play scene. Which version do you prefer?

8) Which, if any, of the three interpretations of the nunnery scene we discussed in class explains Jacobi's performance?

After our class viewing, we spent two more class sessions discussing the film and looking again at crucial scenes. Then I placed the tape on reserve at the audio visual service and waited for the papers. The quality of the papers themselves and the student comments on the end-of-the-term evaluations suggested that I had found a solution to the problem of the paper in my Shakespeare class.

I repeated the Hamlet assignment the next semester and was again pleased with the results. The next year, however, the Miami University Department of Theater staged Romeo and Juliet. I had never used the BBC tape of Romeo and Juliet in my class since I had been extremely disappointed in this version, but I did not want my students to miss this opportunity to compare two performances of the play, so I recast the paper assignment. Now the students were forced to comment on two different interpretations of the play, comparing and contrasting the strengths and weaknesses of the amateur and professional versions. Again my students approached the assignment with enthusiasm and confidence, some arguing with vigor that Eric Hissom, a Miami student, was every bit as effective as Patrick Ryecart as Romeo or that Stephanie Lenin (Miami) was superior to Rebecca Saire.

I have also used the tapes of The Merchant of Venice and Richard II for this assignment and have now decided to use a different play each semester and next year allow students to write on two or three different plays. Although I initially thought that only a controversial production, such as that of Jacobi, would work, I have found that these other plays work equally well, for in each case the performance challenges their preconceived notions. The key, I think, is for them to have read and discussed the play prior to viewing the play. When we viewed the BBC version of The Merchant of Venice, students finally could understand and articulate the effect of the juxtaposition of the scenes in Belmont and Venice, they finally could understand the importance of the ring episode and the significance of the final act in Belmont, and they could comment intelligently on the reasons behind the characterizations of Portia's other suitors. And now to see Shylock before them they had to struggle with their mixed and changing feelings toward Shylock throughout the play. And although they had accepted the allegorical reading of the trial scene, watching the intimate exchanges between Gemma Jones as Portia and Warren Mitchell as Shylock gave a new dimension to the scene. As one student said, "I had never imagined that Portia's lines could be directed only to Shylock, but when I saw it, I liked it, and it seemed absolutely right."

Of course, it may not be right, and I and other students disagreed, but forcing the students to analyse and review a performance of a Shakespeare play makes them aware of my major premise - that Shakespeare plays are much more effective on the stage than in the study. Further they come to understand that the plays allow for, even demand, varied and creative reinterpretations, interpretations which they can examine carefully and comment upon intelligently.

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SHAKESPEARE ANXIETY

by
Diana Rice

The best feature of the Folger General Reader's pocket edition of I Henry IV is the synopsis of the scene's action that precedes the text of each scene. To some, that synopsis is to the play what a Cliff's Notes Chapter Summary, carefully cut and pasted in above each chapter, would be to The Grapes of Wrath. However, in the case of Shakespeare's plays, whatever information we can give concerning the plays, we should give...before the students read.

Of course that preparation includes cultural, historical, and biographical information and a performance when possible, but those four are not enough. They only occasionally initiate that which we long to teach, an appreciation for Shakespeare's skill with the language, for metaphor and pun, for the single word that becomes significant, for parallelism and repetition, for poetry. Nevertheless, it is Shakespeare's language, either the poetry or the archaisms, that students view as the roadblock, not the bridge. The challenge for teachers, then, is great.

First we must do all we can to assuage student insecurity about the plot of the play. The plot must not be their major concern, for the plays are not "whodunits". If the text has a scene synopsis, encourage the students to read it. If not, then the teacher can provide the information about what the student will "hear" happening in the next scene. Share with the class what already existing stories Shakespeare drew from to create the play. Give students an opportunity to "free write" or enter in their journals responses to questions that will help them remember and understand the plot. These questions may be soul-searching, but they don't have to be (See Fig. 1).

Finally, before students begin reading, or early in the reading, tell them of a word or idea that is significantly repeated in the play. Alert them to "honor" in I Henry IV, to sight in King Lear, to light and dark in Romeo and Juliet and begin them writing down instances of the word or idea from the first scene. These pre-announced words and ideas may be multiple or the teacher can chance that marvelous lightbulb—a student recognizing another theme once he's become comfortable with one.

Sometimes, however, the word choice in a speech or dialogue, although skillfull, does not directly relate to the pre-selected word or idea. And, no matter what the teacher has explained, some students still claim, "I don't understand," often sincerely.

Explaining the plot again usually is not the best solution, nor is directly analyzing the speech yourself. Lead the students to discover meaning by having them pull out either words they do know or words they think are significant. Like any discovery learning activity, this attempt may lead nowhere, or, as in my experience, it may provide wonderful insights. For those who don't know what a "significant" word is, tell them to grab anything that's not an article. The weight of all of the words will overshadow any that don't fit in a pattern or theme or tone. Enlist the whole class and put the words in plain sight on the board. Then ask questions. Are these words positive or negative? Is the speaker drawing pictures or speaking literally? What are the

pictures? What do the pictures have in common? What words have similar meanings? How much repetition is there? What idea is repeated? Is there a shift in topic or tone from the first words to the last words? The answers and conclusions are usually more than enough information to keep learning going.

Finally, the test on the Shakespeare play can be a non-anxious learning moment as well. Since the only secret in "the book" is the meaning the students have given the text, the tests I give are open-book with all the essay and creative options given to the students several days before the test takes place. Always available as an essay option is the chance to use the accumulated data on the word or idea the students have been recording throughout the reading. Always available as a creative option is a "found" poem, built from a significant speech in the play with a paragraph explaining the word choices. "Found" poetry, originally cutting and pasting the printed word ransom-note style, is an excellent form for recreating the rhythms and parallelisms of Shakespeare's poetry as well as simplifying the meaning (See Fig. 2).

Without the guidance a teacher can provide, Shakespeare can be a mystery students race to the end of, gloomily confident the last chapter will probably be missing anyway. The teacher's role is to ease plot anxiety and focus attention on the object of loathing, language, and make it understandable, yes, even respected and liked.

Fig. 1

1. Your older brother or sister is the "star" of the family, following in your parent's footsteps and/or expectations. He/She is respected by everyone. But since childhood, you've chosen a different route to get attention. You're not quite as conforming to the rules and norms of society. You plan to reform eventually, maybe, when you have to.

2. Every time you hear the story of the prodigal son who got all the good stuff even though he was bad for a long time, you get a little mad. You work hard all the time, trying to please your parents and teachers and coaches and yourself. Occasionally you do get a ittle tired of it though.

3. You once had or have a friend you thought "used" you to get to know someone or pass a class or get rides. When you wanted a favor this person was nowhere to be found.

4. You know someone everyone laughs with or about, everyone invites to parties; but no one really respects or trusts with anything important. This person could be a relative, perhaps, a neighbor, a classmate.

5. Do you know a married couple that seem well-suited to each other? What are they like? How do they act together?

6. What kinds of names or joking things would you say to a friend you wanted to tease, about being very tall or very short, for instance?

*******React or answer the questions for one or more of the above to prepare for I Henry IV.

Fig. 2

I purpose

I have sworn

to have the due

of my bond

Carrion flesh

I receive

Not three thousand

ducats gold

Gaping Pig

What pain to the nose!

Harmless cat

What pain to the eye!

A bagpipe

What pain to the eye!

A lodged hate

A loathing

I bear for one

Antonio

This found poem was taken from Shylock's speech on page 110. The first two stanzas are taken from lines 34-37 and state what Shylock wants. The third stanza is taken from lines 47-56 and tells of an unexplainable hatred of certain things. The last stanza is taken from lines 60-61 and describes Shylock's unexplainable hatred for Antonio.

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TEACHING SHAKESPEARE TO THE UNDERGRADUATE

by

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For the last two years faculty workshops at St. Scholastica have focused on student development. Lee Knefelkamp, from the University of Maryland, and Larry Copes, from Augsburg, have described development studies, those of Piaget, Chickering, Kohlberg and chiefly those of Perry. Both Knefelkamp and Copes have done extensive testing of the Perry theory in analyzing the learning characteristics of students. I came away from the workshops and asked myself, "What does all of this have to do with the teaching of Shakespeare?" I have realized these studies can serve as a guide to approaching the teaching of Shakespeare to the undergraduate. Indeed these studies confirm a flexibility with which I have approached the teaching of Shakespeare for the past ten years.

In none of the studies of student development do Knefelkamp or Copes believe they have completed their observations. However, I do find that what has been outlined as descriptive of student development does speak of the students in classes I teach. Knefelkamp's description of student development has indicated to me that an awareness of meeting the student at his/her level is a positive choice in achieving what is a primary goal for all teachers of Shakespeare: to show the joy of the music, the beauty and the intoxicating complexity of the master of English drama.

According to Knefelkamp's and her collaborator Janet Cornfield's interpretation of Perry and his collaborator Holland, students develop through a set of dependable stages. Although there are age oriented differences, students progress through a series of stages, in each of which they need varying degrees of support and challenge.

Most students coming into college out of high school, new to college and generally new to Shakespeare in my experience, usually are in the dualistic or second stage. This student will anticipate knowledge as a collection of information which is to be separated into right and wrong answers.

The older student will progress through this stage much more quickly than the younger counterpart. The student in the second stage of the Perry scheme as studied by Knefelkamp, perceives his/her role as one of receiving and demonstrating that s/he has learned the "right" answers. For this student, peers are valueless and the teacher is the knower of absolute truth. Self evaluation for this student is a matter of "right" answer equals "good" person. This student needs to be supported with structure, with a well organized syllabus, and an opportunity to demonstrate that s/he does know who said "something is rotten in the state of Denmark." Simultaneously this student needs to be led to the discovery of the diversity and multiplicity of the next two stages of learning. Respect for this student, giving him/her an opportunity to practice skills, particularly beginning skills of comparing and contrasting, is important.

The student in stage three, the early multiplistic stage of development, has shifted from believing "all" knowledge is knowable to believing that "most" knowledge is knowable. Process is perceived: there is a right way to find right answers. In the third multiplistic stage the student's peers have something to offer in group discussion. From the teacher this student wants the process to be modeled. Learning is important to the student and hard work is the measure of progress. Since this student works long and hard s/he expects this fact to be taken into account as a component of "fairness" of evaluation, which is a major concern to this student. In the third stage the student will ask the question, "How many pages should I write to get an A?" When the grade is less than A and the student has produced many pages, s/he wonders how the teacher can give a bad grade simply because the teacher holds a different opinion. Complexity is a matter of quantity not of quality and this student is searching for the "really right" answer. In stage three the student still needs structure, particularly in statements of how s/he will be evaluated and exactly what s/he is expected to do for this class. This student is both secure and challenged to a point with questions which ask him/her to do such tasks as to describe several interpretations of a given play, of theme, of character.

As the early multiplistic stage evolves into late multiplicity, the student believes that very little is known with certainty. There are only a few areas of sure knowledge. Since so much is uncertain, this student is ready to make his or her own choices. In the late multiplistic or fourth stage of learning development the student looks to the teacher to model the process; this independent student much prefers to determine the content and the goal of study. At this late multiplistic stage the student studies how to think for him/her self. Good at analysis and at relating and integrating the class content to life situations, the student in this stage is learning to balance the delight of discovering independent original thought with learning to submit that thought to qualitative criteria.

For multiplicity the student progresses to a fifth stage described as a stage of contextual relativism. The student in this stage views knowledge as disconnected from concepts of absolute truth. Dualisms of right and wrong exist within a context to be judged by "rules of adequacy" determined by expertise. The teacher has authority because of the expertise possessed. The student in the relativistic stage enjoys intellectually shifting from context to context and applying the ruler of adequacy to information, perspectives, concepts, and judgements. Peers of the student in the contextual relativistic stage are accepted if they apply expertise in an appropriate manner. At this stage the student deals easily with questions which may ask him/her to discuss diverse applications. Learning for the student is exciting, at least until s/he realized the dilemma of the need to choose a single position out of many equally good possibilities. This student separates evaluation of material submitted from evaluation of him/her self. Criticism becomes an accepted, legitimate part of the process of learning. Generally, from this stage the student is ready for the role modeling provided by the scholarship of graduate shcool.

Although this description is a simplification, it does provide a frame from which I believe student development can be taken into consideration when teaching Shakespeare. The dualistically oriented student will be best served with a structured syllabus with which s/he can be secure while at the same time being challenged into increasing multiplicity. The beginning student to whom I have taught Shakespeare for the past ten years may have read, or at least heard of, Romeo and Juliet: little more. This is generally true. This student comes with a fear that Shakespeare will be incomprehensible. "Old English," which everyone knows Shakespeare uses, becomes the

ultimate challenge. I find that beginning with one of the comedies such as Twelfth Night and working toward the more complex plays works best. The sonnets can serve as effective points of departure. The dualistic student will center on choosing as a favorite sonnet one which I have introduced, while the relativistic student will surprise me with a choice I would not have expected to couple with student choice. Because the diction and syntax differ from twentieth century usage, it is helpful to use recordings of the sonnets, to read aloud myself, and to have the student read, and indeed memorize, the verse. This enables the student to begin to hear the inflection and thus the music of the line. What has been said about hearing the music of the words of the sonnets, applies, of course, just as readily to the plays.

At any level of development the student will profit by seeing a production of Shakespeare. Whenever the Guthrie has offered a production, there has been an enormous benefit in traveling to Minneapolis. There has also been a special value in engaging a Guthrie artist to talk about his/her experience in creating and playing a role. Two local university drama departments also perform Shakespeare in alternate years. Through their efforts I take advantage of whatever might be offered. Artists who create local productions are very willing to share their experience. This past spring because of a special grant, English set designer Douglas Heap spent several months in Duluth. He very willingly shared the concepts governing his choice for a delightful set for a production of A Midsummer's Night Dream at the University of Minnesota-Duluth.

Most beneficial in teaching Shakespeare to undergraduates has been the availability of the BBC production of Shakespeare on TV. While I share many of the reservations critics have expressed about specific productions, in lieu of live performance the televised versions of the various plays have helped the student realize the possibilities of the plays.

In dealing with these possibilities I try to keep the choices simple for the student in early developmental stages while for the student in later stages, variety is exciting. Within a given class, awareness of student variability due to developmental stages suggests that the undergraduate learns best when his/her developmental stage is taken into consideration.

These realizations are only the beginning. I hope to find Shakespearean assignments from within the application of the Perry model. Certainly Shakespeare offers a seemingly unlimited complexity while at the same time offering an excellent means to challenge the less experienced student to maturity. Much more can be tried in the process of teaching Shakespeare, and indeed all subjects in supporting and challenging the student as s/he grows to maturity.

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Teaching Critical Thinking Through Shakespeare

"Triumphs Through Tragedies"

by
Judy M. Gesch

For years, we as English teachers have been guilty of an injustice. Many of us have been satisfied that we have adequately armed the college bound student and passed along our inherent love of Shakespeare when our students evidence knowledge of what transpired in those plays we have selected to teach. In settling for literal comprehension only, we not only ill equip our students to face the literary world, but we also ignore the true nature of a Shakespearean tragedy.

The 1979-1980 National Assessment of Educational Progress in reading and literature revealed that while most nine, thirteen, and seventeen-year-olds studied were able to comprehend literature on the literal level and make low level inferences, they were unable to make judgements and critically respond to literature. Very few students were able to return to the text and support their views. Purves explains,

> While many students can read a text in the sense of making some general statement about what it says, they have great difficulty in reading a text in the sense of drawing inferences about the text, in examining its tone or structure, or in thinking in other ways about what they read. Students appear to have acquired a superficial skill but not the skill associated with being a fully functioning literate member of society (1984, 2).

Through his complex characters, Shakespeare explores timeless and controversial themes, questions of murder, revenge, forbidden love, greed, political corruption, suicide, and insanity to name a few. MacBeth heeds the prompting of a power-hungry wife to murder his friend and king, Duncan. Two teens ignore their parents' wishes to satisfy their forbidden love; Romeo and Juliet choose suicide over life without one another. A young Dane, Hamlet must renounce his love and perhaps his salvation to pursue a one man quest to seek revenge against his father's murderer and to save his beloved country.

The scenarios read like modern day soap operas. They involve themes and age groups not unfamiliar to young readers. Adolescents do have vehement opinions on young love, adolescent suicide, political corruption, and revenge. If we as teachers encourage the students to go beyond simple plot analysis, they

will question characters' actions, make and support value judgements of their own, and update Shakespeares' ideas to the 20th century. Therefore, I suggest, to do real justice to both the work and the student, teachers not only help their students understand Shakespeare, but also promote critical thinking activities in conjunction with the study of these plays.

To do so, I suggest a three step approach to teaching Shakespeare: (1) familiarize students with Shakespeare's language, style, and themes; (2) assist them in reading and comprehending the play, and (3) provide opportunities to both write and discuss critically in the classroom.

Current reading theory emphasizes the role of the student's prior knowledge and experience in his comprehension of literary material. Students better understand reading material if they can relate it to their background knowedge or schema (Smith, Carey, Harste, 1982, 24). Because few students are well versed in the language and style of Elizabethan English, it is important that we provide background or experience in Shakespeare prior to expecting them to read and analyze a work on their own. This can best be accomplished by exposing them to an actual production of Shakespeare. In larger metropolitan areas, professional Shakespearean companies often offer student matinees of their performances. Otherwise, college, high school, or community theater groups may be involved in such productions. Some of these organizations will send travelling troups of actors to schools to perform scenes and explain theatrical habits of the time for a minimal fee.

If these solutions are not practical, many find productions are aired on public broadcasting systems which may legally be taped and shown to classroom groups for up to a year after the air date. Other more popular versions of Shakespearean plays, such as Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet, can be rented through film catalogues and video stores or are sometimes offered as special screenings at local theaters. In fact, video cassettes of popular Shakespearean films now can be purchased through English supply catalogues for your own school libraries. Many local libraries also offer extensive film catalogues and could be consulted as to their offerings of Shakespearean plays.

Begin the students' experience with a short synopsis of the play so they know what to expect. Perhaps have them then read sample scenes and point out Shakespeare's style, his use of puns and sometimes raucous wit. Students working in pairs may better analyze passages for double meanings or may recognize parallel characters more easily. Having groups of students create practice puns to present to the class may enhance their enjoyment of Shakespeare's style and appreciation of his wit. Given some prior examples, your class will be tempted to watch more closely to "catch" the off-color remarks. I have witnessed an audience of sixteen and seventeen-year-olds squeal delightedly at comments of Mercutio in Romeo and Juliet.

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As you actually begin to read a play in your class, it may help to give the students a preview of the work. Explain the background of the story, as many of Shakespeare's ideas can be traced directly to actual historical incidents or other literary works. Perhaps give the students clues, historical names or events to send them on their own mystery hunt to find the thread of Shakespeare's story. Romeo and Juliet, for example, can bring to mind a myriad of famous lovers who appeared prior to Shakespeare's time. Names such as Launcelot and Guinevere, and Pyramus and Thisbe make prompt parallels to be drawn and secondary sources to be consulted. Industrious students might even be encouraged to seek out the actual story Shakespeare may have used as a model, such as Il Novellino by Salernitano or Masuccio's Histories (Ribner, Kittredge, 1971, 964).

Once familiar with the text as well as Shakespeare's style, a student is equipped to begin reading the play. Often, I encourage the students to read along in class while experiencing the richness of the language on a cassette or record which has been professionally produced. Study guides are given out prior to each act which provide questions to spark the students' comprehension with the exception of Act Five where suspense at the outcome of the tragedy must be maintained!

In addition, ample time must be provided each class period for student discussion. Students must be encouraged to ask questions. Conversely, we, as teachers, must challenge them with demanding questions of our own. Instead of asking your class, "What did Hamlet do in Act III?," exhort them to answer, "Why do you think he did it?" Furthermore, ask them to evaluate and justify their responses to such questions as, "Was Hamlet justified in feighing madness, or in rejecting Ophelia, or in chastising his own mother?" Invite them to go one step further in imagining their relationships with friends. What is the responsibility of a boyfriend to his girlfriend or his or her family? Do they feel this has changed from Shakespeare's time? In this way, students will begin to prepare for critical debate and writing activities following completion of the play. Petrosky cautions,

> All too often, classroom discussions are dominated by quick, easy answers and teachers with predetermined answers and hidden agendas. Students need to be involved in genuine problem solving discussions that focus on their interpretations and their use of evidence to support and criticize their interpretations (1982, 18).

Having created the proper atmosphere, after reading the play, students can participate in post-reading discussion and writing activities which challenge their critical thinking capacity. When properly conducted, these activities can motivate readers to take a stand, cite evidence, and think about modern problems. One favorite activity of mine has been to generate a list of statements either true or false. Students then find evidence, on their own, from the text or secondary sources to support their

views. Later, they share the information with their group, where evidence is synthesized and arguments are strengthened. Subsequent to this group activity, the class participates in a debate. Following their reading of Hamlet, for example, students might investigate the following points:

1. Hamlet was a noble character.
2. The ghost of Hamlet's father was a spirit sent from hell.
3. The main motive Hamlet had for killing Claudius was personal revenge.
4. The main conflict of the play was between Claudius and Hamlet.
5. By killing Claudius, Rosencranz, and Guildenstern, Hamlet proved that he had become totally evil.
6. Laertes was a perfect parallel to Hamlet.
7. Hamlet's tragic flaw was his procrastination.
8. Hamlet was insane at the end of the play.
9. Hamlet never achieved a catharsis.
10. Hamlet sacrifices his own salvation.

After a study of MacBeth, your class might discuss the motives behind Duncan's murder (Lady MacBeth or the witches and fate as catalysts for example), MacBeth as a sympathetic character, or the total corruption of MacBeth. It still amazes me to hear adolescents arguing about MacBeth's inner nature as they file into the hall to their next class. In a parochial school, the question of Hamlet's ultimate salvation creates fierce discussion as well as an insightful view into students' own beliefs.

Another approach for classroom discussion involves role playing. In one situation, we might create a courtroom setting to try Hamlet for the death of Polonius or Ophelia. A jury of classmates and a judge must discriminate between arguments and evidence presented by the prosecution and defense lawyers. Similarly, we might create a tribunal to assess Brutus' role in Caesar's death, or a papal council to determine disciplinary action with respect to Friar Lawrence's involvement in two tragic deaths. In these examples, students might have to research Roman history or study church traditions to prepare cases.

These discussions can also serve as pre-writing activities to transform the young reader into the discriminating writer. Current research in reading stresses the importance of encouraging students to write about literature. Reading theorists explain that reading itself is a "composing" process. Goodman explains,

"The reader also constructs a text during reading through transactions with the published text, and the reader's schemata are also transformed in the process through the assimilation and accomodation Piaget has described" (1984, 80).

Petrosky emphasizes the relationship between reading and writing about reading saying, "our comprehension of texts, whether they are literary or not, is more an act of composition--for understanding is composing--than of information retrieval, and that the best possible representation of our understandings of texts begins with certain kinds of compositions" (1982, 19). By asking students to write about their reading, we force them to clarify and substantiate their view of the written work.

Students may be asked to transfer their perspectives on character in the form of a character analysis. First they will formulate a thesis which they believe presents the underlying motivation for the character they have chosen, "Laertes was Hamlet's alterego," or "Lady MacBeth was a very loving wife" for example. Then, as writers, they must go about proving their hypotheses using the text as verification.

Even more intriguing is to ask the students to draw written parallels to other Shakespearean characters, Brutus/MacBeth for example, to current dramatic personae, Tennesee Williams's Laura/a 20th century Ophelia?, or to modern day noteworthy figures; "Is Hinkley a modern day Hamlet?" Such a thought encourages further textual study as well as research in current periodicals.

Kahn, Walter, and Johannessen (1984) suggest a "What If" exercise to explore a character's values. Through a multiple choice format, the reader is asked to speculate such things as,

> If people started a campaign to elect Brutus president, he would
>
> A. pretend he didn't want to run;
>
> B. try to talk them into running a better candidate;
>
> C. make deals with the other political leaders to make sure he won the election
>
> D. refuse to run (1984,29)

Students select one of these questions from a larger list, choose an answer, and write a paragraph explaining their choice.

If your purpose is to teach tone and structure of the play, a student might best comprehend if given a chance to recreate the Shakespearean mode with a play all his own. Using the same basic theme and structure, but creating 20th century characters, have your class work in groups with each group submitting its own act to a play. As Estes reports on a study completed by M.E. Wetmore, "Her findings indicated that rewriting is superior to summarizing

as a means of making the ideas of text more apprehensible" (1982,91).

In addition, the teacher encourages an atmosphere of cooperation in his/her classroom. Perhaps five groups each draft a successive act until an entire play is complete. A production of that play for their own or other English classes might enhance the procedure.

There are many activities creative teachers might pursue to help their students become "fully functioning literate members of society" if they are willing to nurture the seeds of critical thinking in a challenging provocative classroom environment. With a little confidence in our students and ourselves, we can turn our classrooms into fun and rewarding places to be, and even through Shakespearean tragedy, emerge triumphant.

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Lutheran High School West
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An Innovative, Traditional, Successful Shakespeare Course

by
Robert E. Burkhart

More than ten years ago I began using taped excerpts of campus productions in my undergraduate Shakespeare class. The purposes were to bring something of the feel of live drama into the classroom and to show students that their peers were capable of handling Shakespeare's language. In the fall of 1981, after spending that summer in Washington as a member of the first NEH "Shakespeare in Performance" Institute at the Folger Shakespeare Library, I began using in-class performances by the students themselves as well. The two techniques complement one another and combine readily with the usual class discussion to produce a course that includes both traditional and innovative elements.

I begin the semester--after a standard Shakespeare's life and times lecture--with a television tape of excerpts from a production of Midsummer Night's Dream. Even the small screen conveys the theatrical atmosphere, and students get to see other students speaking the lines. (The excerpts are designed to show the introduction of the major plot elements, how they fit together, and how problems are resolved in the festive ending.)

While the course proceeds with class discussions for a week or so, the students have been broken down into two or three acting groups of six or seven each. They have been assigned a scene or group of scenes to perform for the rest of the class at a specified time. (When we reach their scene in a particular play, we simply have the performance instead of discussion, then talk about the performance afterwards.) The students usually arrange to borrow costumes from the drama department, and at times we have had use of the smaller of the two campus theaters as well.

The first acting assignment, for example, is usually the latter part of Richard II (from Richard's death to the end of the play). What we get is a situation in which the performance in a sense runs counter to the plot line. Richard is dead and Bolingbroke is King, but what we see dramatically is Richard's valiant death contrasted with Bolingbroke's feelings of guilt.

The second acting group usually does something from one of the tragedies. The first two scenes of Macbeth, with the "lost and won" echo, offer an excellent means of showing the relationship between the witches and the "real" world in the play.

The final play of the course, The Tempest, is another for which I have a tape of a campus production. By this point the students are much more sophisticated in their reactions to and comments on the theatrical aspects of the play. It helps, too, that they see their professor--playing a father-figure (Egeus and Alonso) both times--in the Midsummer Night's Dream and Tempest tapes, but it is not necessary to go to that extreme in order to apply the method.

We have, then, a course that effectively combines drama as literature with drama as theater in its approaches to Shakespeare. Students tend to adapt more quickly to Shakespeare's language and conventions, and they also enjoy and profit from the experience.

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NEED A SHAKESPEARE ESCAPE AND RENEWAL?
VISIT STRATFORD, ONTARIO!

by
Judith Keck

In July, 1985, I trotted off to Stratford for four days and five plays that included King Lear, Twelfth Night, Measure for Measure, as well as Antigone, and The Pirates of Penzance. In my spare time I visited the local museum for an up-close look at Festival costumes from productions past, a presentation from the props department, a lecture by Northrup Frye as well as shopping, some fine meals, and several games of Trivial Pursuit by the river.

Stratford is a beautiful little community with lots of flowers, lawns, and green space. In spite of the thousands of visitors you'll find no traffic jams, lines, or unruly crowds.

I hope your interest is adequately piqued so that you'll read on and discover the details of a wonderful getaway for English teachers.

WHERE IS STRATFORD?

Stratford is located northeast of Detroit in Ontario province and is north of Highway 401. From Detroit, travel time in Canada is about four hours.

HOW IS IT POSSIBLE TO SEE SO MANY PLAYS IN SUCH A SHORT PERIOD OF TIME?

Stratford has three different theaters where a variety of plays are performed in repertory six days a week. On Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday there are both matinee and evening performances. The season runs from May to October.

HOW EXPENSIVE IS THE TRIP?

During my stay the rate of exchange for U.S. dollars was $1.00 U.S. for $1.33 Canadian money. Therefore U.S. dollars go far. Before you go to Canada, call your local bank to determine the current exchange rate. While all Canadian businesses take U.S. money, you'll get the best exchange rate at a Canadian bank. Banks in Canada are closed on Saturday as well as Sunday. The Canadian rate of exchange on Visa, MasterCard and American Express is calculated by the credit card companies on the date the invoice clears their offices.

WHAT KIND OF ACCOMMODATIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Stratford has traditional motels but I enjoy staying in the homes of people in the community. That's arranged through the Festival box office. The cost is quite inexpensive and I've enjoyed meeting the people of Stratford.

WHEN I'M NOT ATTENDING THEATER PERFORMANCES, WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO DO?

- The Gallery/Stratford is a local museum that features a variety of shows; this is one of my favorite side trips - don't miss it.

- Enjoy the river - All along the river is a park with rolling lawns, picnic tables, and visiting swans and ducks. Many places sell box lunches and it's a beautiful place to enjoy a glass of wine and a game of Scrabble.

- Meet the Festival Program - The public is invited to meet actors, directors, designers, and staff for presentations about the plays being performed and for questions. I've especially enjoyed programs presented by the props/costumes department.

- Festival Bookstore - Lots of momentos from the theater - books, posters, postcards, mugs, etc. It's large with a great collection of quality stuff.

- Restaurants - You can spend lots at an assortment of French restaurants or a little at a variety of other places. Because the theater is the focus of everyone's existence at Stratford, many restaurants close from 8-10:30. You'll need to chose if you prefer to eat around 5:30 or after the theater. The Stratford English Parlour is one of my favorites.

- Shopping - The thousands of people who attend the theater at Stratford are the primary industry for this community. Lots of attractive merchandise is available in a variety of shops. No gaudy junky souvenir shops here.

- Cabaret - Some of the highlights of trips in previous years have been Cabaret performances at the Jester Arms after the theater.

- Celebrity Lecture Series - On scheduled Sunday mornings literary scholars present Shakespeare lectures.

- Backstage tours of the Festival Theater are also held on Sunday morning. Get tickets in advance - it's quite popular.

- Summer seminars are offered at the Festival. Dates and information are included in Festival brochures.

- Summer Concerts - Musical groups such as Dave Brubeck's Quartet and celebrities such as Dionne Warwick present concerts on Monday evenings when the theater is dark. Local groups also perform around the community at places and times announced locally.

WHERE CAN I GET ALL THE PARTICULARS?

Write to: Stratford Festival Box Office
P.O. Box 520
Stratford Ontario Canada N5A6V2

The Box Office doesn't open for the season until March, so it may be after that opening when you receive promotional pamphlets and schedules.

There's nothing left to say but enjoy. You'll see world-renowned actors and elegant productions. After your first visit, you'll plan to return again and again.

Licking County Schools
Newark, Ohio

INTERESTING THE UNINITIATED IN RENAISSANCE LOVE SONNETS

by

VEENA P. KASBEKAR

Inspiring in students jaded by MTV an interest in Renaissance love sonnets can prove a challenging experience. So I rely on sensationalism to make the poems come alive to the Bible-belted, Appalachian, first-generation-college students who bespecter my Great Books class (108/308, Medieval and Renaissance European literature). We talk about form—how love can be disciplined into fourteen lines, both the Italian and the English way—then they goggle at the content of specific love sonnets by Petrarch, Shakespeare, and Donne. By the end of the one-and-a-half-hour session, the class is humming like the Elizabethan nest of singing birds; one hefty Junior even comes up and announces he will do his final research paper on Shakespeare's sonnets, or, grandly, on the history of English poetry upto and including the Renaissance.

The discussion on form is brief, since this isn't a poetry course and we are restricted by time. We analyze the stanzaic structure and rhyme scheme of the Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnet types, how, in the one case, the content is molded into the abbaabba cdecde/ccdccd scheme of the octave and the sestet (with variations, in English translations), and, in the other, into the unswerving abab cdcd efef gg pattern of the Shakespearean three-quatrains-and-a-clinching-couplet format. I impress them with words like "iambic pentameter" and "hendecasyllabic" lines (in the Italian original), then, for fun, we scan a couple of sonnets by Petrarch, doing the same with Shakespeare and with Donne's Italian/English combinations when we get to them. There may be other ways, but I like to begin with a discussion of form before I analyze its essential relatedness to content.

Petrarch's "Blest Be the Day" serves as the opening poem. The students marvel at the weirdness of a man who could platonically love and write about the same woman for twenty-one years (that one can experience love at first sight in a church setting seems quite proper to them), and then, after she died, continue to pine for her for twenty-six more ("Go, Grieving Rimes of Mine"). The English majors, fresh from a study of Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily," venture to call him a "necrophiliac"; the religious types frown on the poet's soliciting a mere mortal, a "lover" at that, to intercede for him in heaven. The English majors again, possessing a tenaciously retentive memory, argue that perhaps it's a case of amor vincit omnia (à la Chaucer's nun; we have begun the course with the Prologue), that Renaissance writers are no longer afraid of the danse macabre since Death can now unite the lover and the beloved.

Yet, because it is unrequited, this love is bittersweet, posit some of the more soulful Freshman; they now learn that love as sorrow, far from being a modern American phenomenon, was a major Petrarchan theme which, however, along with some of the flamboyantly self-conscious imagery, later degenerated into the "Petrarchism" of poetasters.

By the time we finish Petrarch, the students are convinced (how does a professor, carried away by her own enthusiasm, avoid misconceptions and misinterpretations in students' minds?) that literature is luridly confessional autobiography, so when we get to Shakespeare's sonnets the class is ready to burst with horrible, unvoiced suspicions. I use sonnets #18, 20, 130, and 42, in that order, to emphasize the "personal drama" of the sonnet sequence. These may not all represent Shakespeare's best, but they are certainly effective attention-getters.

"Shall I compare thee to a summer's day" (#18) is generally well received. Fighting their shame at enjoying a poem, students discuss the particularly Renaissance images, such as "eye of heaven" for "sun"; some non-English majors triumphantly point out that like Petrarch Shakespeare too is not afraid of death; in fact, the poets' fame as well as their beloved's beauty have outlived their physical deaths. Good, good.

Sonnet 20, "A woman's face, with nature's own hand painted,/ Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion" is the poem that completely floors them. As I read it aloud, their expressions pass from a bland "I don't understand this" to perplexion, pink-eared confusion, and, finally, enlightenment, at which every student abruptly lower her/his eyes. "So what's going on here?" I grin. One female ballplayer boldly raises her head and flicks a limp wrist at me. Snickers, chortles, nudges ripple through the room. This is the first time the class has been so animated since the Miller's Tale.

A discussion ensues on the homosexual content of the poem, belied by its final couplet, "But since she [Nature] pricked thee out for women's pleasure,/ Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure." We argue about whether literature is necessarily autobiographical; I tell them that Elizabethan laws considered sodomy a capital offense, which would have deterred even avowed homosexuals from publishing their sexual preference; that Shakespeare, writing at the end of a tradition of sequential sonneteering, and following such illustrious names as Sidney and Spenser, had perforce to use an outrageous topic to grab audience interest. And it had worked, hadn't it? When, in their whole lives, had they been so avidly interested in Shakespeare?

I continue more sedately about "W.H.," about how sonnets 1 to 126 were written to a beautiful young man that the poet professed to love, that the first 16 sonnets urged the young man to marry and propagate his beauty, that classical Greek tradition celebrated love between men as more noble than that between the sexes. (They nod, knowing that Renaissance humanists had revived classical ideas and literature.)

Going back to the poem, we notice the puns, "pricked," "master mistress," "a man in hue," that Shakespeare was generally so fond of, then we move on to sonnet 130, "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." We compare the woman's deliberately anti-traditional earthiness, which they find terribly amusing, with the delicate and evocative images in sonnet 20 and in Petrarch's poems; we differentiate between sensual and platonic love (for one's own and for the other sex), between the current and the Elizabethan connotations of "mistress," "lover"; remembering Chaucer's nun again, we compare medieval and Renaissance ideals of beauty. They dutifully jot down that sonnets 127 to 154 in the sequence were to a sexual partner critics call the Dark Lady, and that there was another player in the drama, a rival poet, whom we would here ignore.

Just as the class is beginning to settle down again we move on to sonnet 42, in which, as in #s 40, 144, 152, the poet bemoans the treachery of his mistress and his

best friend, and where even the clever puns, twists of language, and defensive self-assurance do not hide the writer's anguish at his double loss. Whether or not these sonnets depict the poet's own life, they certainly depict universal types of love and feelings about love—we have loved mortals who were neither Greek gods nor Anglo-Saxon goddesses, "And yet, by heaven . . . as rare,/ As any . . . belied with false compare" (#130); we have lost lovers to best friends and best friends to lovers, yet bravely (or stupidly) attempted to remain friends with both. Like the poet, we have all, at times, been chumps about love; Shakespeare's sonnets are therefore about ourselves, mortals who defy time, death, and sometimes society and family, for that most elemental of human emotions. . . .

Medieval literature had urged that love be divine; Renaissance poetry gloried in its secular aspects. Poets like Donne fused both in such poems as Holy Sonnet XIV, "Batter my heart, three person'd God. . . ." At the mention of divine love the class resumes its church look, only to become once more outraged, this time by the poem's conceits which combine images of war and sexual violence with theology to make an impassioned plea for God's love.

> Take me to you, imprison mee, for I
> Except you enthrall mee, shall never be free,
> Nor ever chast, except you ravish mee.

Unlike physical rape, divine rape of the heart cleanses, purifies, asserts Donne, simultaneously one of the most powerful Anglican preachers and most romantic lovers of the last decade of the Elizabethan era. The sexual violence in his poem develops in a direct line of pain from Petrarch's "wounding" by Cupid's arrow; both poets seek intercession with God—the earlier humanist, living in Roman Catholic Italy, through a Mary-surrogate, the later one, living in Protestant England, through an intensely personal approach.

Ultimately, in spite of variations, all three poets idealize love: of women, of male friends, of God; all emphasize the importance of the poet's own feelings; all pit human glory against the divinity or against time. Yet in Shakespeare's disillusionment and in Donne's desperation, students notice a wavering of the earlier exuberant Renaissance self-confidence: Petrarch's faith in his mistress and in his God is serenely steadfast; Shakespeare leaves out God to supplicate his master/mistress; Donne battles with the devil to save his weak faith. Mirroring these poets and the Renaissance itself, we too have moved within the space of an hour and a half from gaiety to gravity; temperamentally, the students are now prepared for The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus and for Hamlet, the melancholy prince of Denmark.

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It Was Greek To Me:
Teaching Shakespeare to General Education Students

by
Chris Boone-Grubbs

As I glanced around my seventh hour classroom, I felt as if I had failed. What began as a joyous introduction of a beloved friend, had turned into "the winter of our discontent." My students had not eagerly learned about the English language. Class discussions had not illuminated the tragic flaw of Brutus but rather the tragedy of having to repeat the course, for the third time.

Where did I go wrong? I had not wildly imagined enthusiastic students demanding more copies of Shakespeare's plays, but I had wanted them to appreciate a man whose words should be important for us all. My desire was to make them care about language and literature.

Where were the signs of understanding and appreciation? Why did I look out only to see blank faces staring back? Was I, in my eagerness to enlighten, refusing to accept the fact that perhaps students of today have been programmed to exist only for the present? As Falstaff feigned death in order to preserve life, were my general education students feigning ignorance in order to escape the frustrations that accompanied repeated failure?

What could I say to them when they asked, "What good is this going to do me?" Most had no plans for college yet would earn twice my salary. Others planned to take over the family farm and never leave the county. What was my purpose? As a result of these frustrations, partly the result of my idealism and my students' narrow perceptions, I have re-assessed and redesigned the way I teach Shakespeare.

I now have plans for general education students, not fantasy students. Instead of dragging them hopelessly through Julius Caesar, I give them what I call "applicable Shakespeare." Rather than telling them that Shakespeare's words are immortal, I try to show them. As an alternative to frustrating them with a play they never really seem to understand, I try to tantalize them with Shakespearean phrases they have not only heard but used.

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My plan for this Shakespearean unit is simple. I give my students a handout of 35 well-known phrases that were originated by Shakespeare. As the class considers each quotation, I briefly discuss the plot of the play, explaining why characters replied as they did. The most important (and strategic) objective is for my students to realize that Shakespeare wrote about universal human qualities as well as about people of yesterday. This universality of Shakespeare is where I now place my emphasis.

Some teachers say that teaching Shakespearean plays, exposing students to his characters and ideas, will in itself, broaden students' minds and exercise their intellects. However, by using my plan, which is certainly less abstract, students will gain a personal application rather than a theoretical one. Each time students hear one of these phrases they will undoubtedly associate it with Shakespeare. When a budget-conscious mother complains that Johnny is "eating her out of house and home," how surprised (and impressed) she will be when Johnny replies, "Hey, Mom! I didn't know you could quote Shakespeare!"

My teaching experiences may be the exception to the rule, but I have found general education students to be vaguely aware of the plot of Julius Caesar but disturbingly apathetic to the outcome of the power struggle. They approach Julius Caesar with a defeatist attitude, bored with words they cannot understand and phrases they cannot comprehend, and gain little. General education students are, quite simply, a different breed from college bound students, and we need to re-assess the teaching of literature to meet their needs. Yes, we want them to know and appreciate Shakespeare's plays, but we must be realistic. The general education student does not need to be frustrated by our traditional methods of teaching Shakespeare which are more closely matched to the needs of college bound students.

My general education students now enjoy listening as I unfold the plots of King Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, and Othello. The stories and characters intrigue them; some even ask for copies of these plays "just to look through." Though many of them will never actually read a Shakespearean play in my class, most of them have learned to appreciate the man whose words of yesterday are still used today.

Examples

1.	"We have seen better days."	As You Like It
2.	"What the dickens!"	The Merry Wives of Windsor
3.	"The wheel is come full circle"	King Lear
4.	"wild goose chase'	Romeo and Juliet
5.	"a world of sighs"	The Comedy of Errors
6.	"star-crossed lovers"	Romeo and Juliet
7.	"There is something in the wind."	The Comedy of Errors
8.	"though last not least'	Julius Caesar
9.	"a tower of strength"	King Richard III
10.	"Love is blind."	The Merchant of Venice

11.	"the milk of human kindness"	MacBeth
12.	"not a mouse stirring"	Othello
13.	"spotless reputation"	Richard II
14.	"choked with ambition"	King Henry VI Part I
15.	"constant as the northern star"	Julius Caesar
16.	"My heart is turned to stone."	Othello
17.	"a dish fit for the gods"	Julius Caesar
18.	"eaten me out of house and home"	King Henry IV Part II
19.	"a foregone conclusion"	Othello
20.	"The game is up."	Cymbelline
21.	"Jealousy, the green-eyed monster"	Othello
22.	"I shall laugh myself to death."	The Tempest
23.	"I will wear my heart upon my sleeve."	Hamlet
24.	"I'll be hanged."	King Henry IV Part I
25.	"It smells to heaven."	Hamlet
26.	"It was Greek to me."	Julius Caesar
27.	"an itching palm"	Julius Caesar
28.	"the short and the long of it"	The Tempest
29.	"as good luck would have it"	The Merry Wives of Windsor
30.	"neither rhyme nor reason"	The Comedy of Errors
31.	"I'll not budge an inch."	As You Like It
32.	"too much of a good thing"	As You Like It
33.	"give the devil his due"	King Henry IV Part I
34.	"as dead as a door-nail"	King Henry VI Part II
35.	"All's well that ends well."	All's Well That Ends Well

Note: Some of these quotations re-appear in various other plays by Shakespeare.

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METHODS AND MADNESS:
Why and How To Teach Shakespeare

by
James E. Davis

I must be mad to have chosen such a presumptuous title. Yes, we all have to be both presumptuous and a little mad (or a lot mad, depending on how well we plan to do) to teach Shakespeare, but we must also have methods. For us mad ones who would teach Shakespeare (and even to high school students!) I will discuss the following topics in this essay: 1) Why study and teach Sheakespeare? 2) What are our goals in teaching Shakespeare? 3) Twenty commandments on teaching Shakespeare. 4) Some practical tips and examples. 5) Admitted difficulties in teaching Shakespeare.

Why Study and Teach Shakespeare?

Shakespeare understood human nature and the study of him helps to humanize us. Travis Bogard says that no one better understood human nature than Shakespeare or saw humans more clearly both without and within. He says that we would be more brutal people had Shakespeare not lived because he told us who and what we are and reminded us that man's actions are capable of integrity and grace (Paraphrase of Travis Bogard, Veidemanis, p. 57). Robert Heilman even places Shakespeare beyond judgement:

> Shakespeare is a very great artist. If he does not reach us it is not his fault but our own;. . .he is now beyond judgement. . .worth a good deal of concentrated and prolonged attention reserved for greatness. (Robert Heilman, p. 256)

Of all English writers indeed of all world writers Shakespeare has had the most attention and acceptance. Only the Bible is available in more languages. His plays are constantly being performed in almost all languages throughout the world. The works of no writer have been written more about by critics. Louis Wright argues that Shakespeare is for all people and that he endures for many reasons, among them the keenness of his perceptions in his knowledge of the characteristics of human beings, his close observations of his world, his interpretation of that world, and his ability to transmute words into music. Closely related to the above is his insight which allowed him to create characters who seem to live and breathe as actual human beings. He also concerned himself with basic emotions and themes of universal appeal so that whatever may be the setting or time of his plays they are really timeless. He did not deal with mere fractions of persons, but with the whole man or woman. And, although he treated topical interests, he treated them in such a way that they go beyond the topical and become universalized. As Louis Rosenblatt says:

> When <u>Hamlet</u> is a moving experience for the adolescent today, may it not be because the play gives beautiful form to a prevalent mood of

> uncertainty and disillusionment, of reluctance to undertake aggressive action in a world gone awry? A more or less looking-on at our own problems may thus be produced by works from earlier times and different settings. (p. 51)

Shakeseare's diction is concise and apt, derived from simple things he observed. Most important, according to Wright, he wrote of significant things. (p. 12) Wright's conclusion as to why Shakespeare lives could almost serve as our credo for teaching his works:

> He lives, let me repeat, because he wrote about fundamental matters that concern us all, is every age and country. He wrote about them lucidly and importantly, rarely wasting ink on triviality, and never pompously obscuring his meaning with the jargon of the poetic trade. And he managed always to convey a sense of truth to his revelation of all aspects of life. Given a set of circumstances, Shakespeare, we feel, explains the way things inevitably happen. In his poetic drama we receive instruction and we experience delight. (p. 15)

What Are Our Goals In Teaching Shakespeare?

According to Jackson Barry:

> Part of teaching Shakespeare consists of conveying the abstract nature of the text as the representation of a work of art, demonstrating that there are pauses, moves, discoveries and so forth which are vital to understanding the play but which are frequently not specifically set forth in the lines. (p. 164)

Barry suggests further that the differences between poetry and drama must be clearly taught. Critics of the poetry of the script and actors looking at the script for possible performance are doing very different things. He says that while the ambiguities of a poem are part of its verbal meaning, actors must choose between alternative readings of their lines so that they reduce the ambiguities for performance.

The real aim in teaching Shakespeare is to teach in a way that students will want to approach Shakespeare again and again on their own either through reading or attending performances. Another important goal, which Elliot Krieger calls the primary one, should be:

> to enable the students to draw hypotheses or conclusions from the objective data of the texts. (p. 286)

Kreiger encourages inductive teaching by which teachers encourage students to construct or arrive at an interpretation; in other words, create or discover.

The Twenty Commandments on Teaching Shakespeare

To further illustrate my madness, I decided to really play God and introduce twice as many commandments as He did—ten negative commandments and ten positive.

The Ten Negative Commandments

1. Thou shalt not spend too much time on remotely connected art and history projects, thus taking time from attention to the texts themselves.

2. Thou shalt not try to teach Shakespeare to students who are not ready for it (and/may never be).

3. Thou shalt not pay too much attention to reading and explaining and not enough attention to helping students to learn to read for themselves.

4. Thou shalt not exhaust a play by spending too much time on it and overkilling with detail.

5. Thou shalt not wear students out with textual paraphenalia such as footnotes and criticism.

6. Thou shalt not be too virtuous in teaching Shakespeare nor engage in bardolotry.

7. Thou shalt not try to make Shakespeare too simple.

8. Thou shalt not use media to avoid the text.

9. Thou shalt not forget that Shakespeare is theatre.

10. And finally, thou shalt not insist that students who do not like Shakespeare are inferior (though in fact that may be true).

I've always thought that do's are really more valuable than don'ts and so I offer ten positive commandments which are radically shortened and re-worded versions of some of Veidemanis' "practical considerations" (pp. 60-61).

The Ten Positive Commandments

1. Thou shalt introduce students to other drama before attempting Shakespeare.

2. Thou shalt keep biography, textual studies, history, psychology, literary criticism, philosophy, sociology, and the Globe Theater subordinate to the study of the play itself.

3. Thou shalt leave to college (for most students) those works which require greater maturity and sensitivity than most high school students have.

4. Thou shalt include comedies, fantasies, and histories, as well as tragedies.

5. Thou shalt use complete texts.

6. Thou shalt plan assignments to develop reading, writing, and speaking proficiencies, not skills better developed in other courses.

7. Thou shalt give students the opportunity to read passages aloud and to perform scenes, but not to the endless boredom of other class members or to the desecration of the given text.

8. Thou shalt plan the Shakespeare program in the high school sequentially so that the same activities and preliminaries are not repeated year after year.

9. Thou shalt combine the study of Shakespeare, to the extent possible, with trips to actual productions.

10. Thou shalt precede the study of Shakespeare's plays with some concentrated study of poetry.

Practical Tips

Commandments are so general they need "fleshing out." Thus I present some practical examples of what has been done fairly successfully by real teachers in teaching Shakespeare:

Six Assignments That Work

I have tried these six assignments, suggested by Veidemanis, and found that they work with any of Shakespeare's plays:

1. Hand out a series of statements based on a soliloquy and ask students to check those which actually correspond to statements in the text.

2. Give out a few isolated passages and ask students to make as many character inferences as possible from the given material. Then restore the passages to context, exploring further their multiple functions within the specific scene and for the total characterization.

3. Before starting the reading of a play, read over a list of well-known Shakespearian quotations, asking students to identify where they have heard them before.

4. Give out short passages for paraphrase. Students are likely to find their paraphrase longer and far more clumsy than the original.

5. Study a specific soliloquy primarily for its series of word choices and images, particularly the use of verbs.

6. Ask students to memorize!

Workshop Approach

The workshop approach may work better with college students than high school students, but I have made use of it with high school students somewhat successfully. Of course, there are innumerable versions of this approach.

Patricia Meszaros describes one which she used with college students where the plays are viewed as blueprints for performance, making them less mysterious and therefore more accessible. She is primarily interested in offering students a way of testing their perceptions of the text in order to build their understanding of it. They are simultaneously going through many of the conditions of theatre in which the text originated and reading the existing text.

She chose four kinds of scenes for the class to work with. These could be described as "big" or public scenes, theatrically simple scenes, scenes which rely heavily on theatrical effects, and scenes designed to show instead of tell. She asked for volunteers to read aloud. Early on the students were pleased to learn that they could question stage directions, and that sometimes by close reading of the text they could clarify, or even correct them.

Even though her workshops were unconventional, at times resembling encounter sessions, Meszaros evaluates the experiment optimistically:

> I am convinced, with reason, that the class in which they work cooperatively with their classmates—strangers to them at the beginning of the course—at the dramatic realization of a printed text, will remain in their memories as one of the most vital experiences of their college years; and that because of that experience, they will remain more favorably disposed toward Shakespeare and more likely to read his plays independently than they would otherwise have been. I expect them to be interested, alert members of the audience for future stage and film productions of Shakespeare's plays. More important, I expect that they will view these productions critically, realizing that any production is an interpretation of the text, and that the text itself is the final authority. (p. 197)

Classroom as Theatre

G. B. Shand describes an approach similar to the workshop approach. He calls it "classroom as theatre." Through acting exercises students and teacher clarify character, tone, and action. They also begin to see the play on stage with the mind's eye while they read. Shand is not aiming toward sophisticated acting and the exercises probably work best for non-theatre students. The non-professional nature of the acting may well be an advantage in that there are fewer distractions than there would be with scenery, lights, properties, etc. The aim of placing the acted scene in a "conceptual framework which elucidates academic questions" about the play is achieved. Both instructor and students make discoveries (p.18)

Examples of Student's Writing about Hamlet

I confess that I have adhered to some of the negative commandments and broken most of the positive ones. I have tried a lot of things that worked well and some that did not. Out of all of this trying, I think forcing the students to think themselves into Shakespeare through writing about a work has proved most successful overall. I have most recently forced students into thinking themseleves into Shakespeare in an introduction to literature course earlier this year. On a take-home exam I used three questions on HAMLET. One of these three questions asked students to compare and contrast their own personality with Hamlet's. This question did not work as well as I had hoped it would, but I had some interesting results, among them this student who found more differences than similarities: *

> In comparing myself with Hamlet I find we have more differences than similarities. The one similarity I find that we have is needing a sense of security, family security. I, like Hamlet, need to know that my family life will be dependable, I need to know that when the time

comes they will be there and that their mental state will be stable enough to depend on. Hamlet and I would probably be at a loss for words if we were placed in a room alone. I have never in my life had to deal with as many problems as he had to deal with. That would come from two different life styles of being raised. Mine, being a more sheltered life and being very dependent on others. Hamlet, on the other hand, was probably raised in a very unguided life style. He seems to be able to depend primarily on himself.

Note how this student comments on Hamlet's alienation without ever using the term and also on his (the student's) lack of alienation. In this second example the student concentrates on language:

Unlike myself, Hamlet is determined and persistent. Hamlet is adamant about his goal of revenge. He was nobility, therefore he was rich (unlike me).

Hamlet was also a master of language. Hamlet had a way with words and people. He was good at winning people over. This is the only trait I can say we might have in common. I enjoy talking and love using language. Although I don't think of myself as very clever, I enjoy speaking figuratively. From time to time I will enjoy throwing an allusion or simile into the story I am telling. Language can make words and meaning go so much farther.

And this next student clearly understands Hamlet's character:

I am much like Hamlet in the way that he can't make up his mind about anything. I usually want someone to prod me along one way or the other. It seems as if I don't want to take responsibility for my decision if it is wrong. I feel that I would act a bit more harshly than Hamlet did. Hamlet has more practice than I do. If it would have been me I probably would have gone straight to Claudius and Gertrude and thrown an accusing finger. It is hard to compare myself to Hamlet because he is in a situation that I will never have to face.

And finally I present this very thoughtful student paper, which clearly indicates how well this question can work when it works. How perceptive this student is:

Believe it or not (Sorry, Mr. Ripley.), Hamlet and I are a lot alike. One way that we're alike is the way we both love and admire our fathers. Hamlet recognized how truly fantastic his father was as the king. Hamlet admired and respected his father's accomplishments as a king. He loved his father dearly and wanted to avenge his father's death not only because of tradition, but because he wanted to out of love.

I have the same feelings for my father that Hamlet had for his. My father was no king, not in the literal sense, but he did a lot of things that I admire. He is a great man and I hope I could be as good as him some day. I love my father, we've been through a lot together. If someone were to take my father away from me, my actions might be the same as Hamlet's. The only exception is that I wouldn't spend so much time not doing anything, I'd get out and do it. I'm very serious.

Hamlet and I are also alike in the way we come off as being insane when we have a lot of things on our minds. Hamlet had to worry about this duty to take on revenge on his father's murderer and he had to worry about what his father's ghost had told him about not hurting his mother. Hamlet had too much on his mind and while he was busy figuring out what to do, he came off as a

fruitcake. Even by doing that, he was protecting himself until his last and final move.

I'm the same way. When I have a lot of things spinning in my mind, I fall into myself. I shut out the world and live within the space provided by my physical self. In there, I can do a great deal of thinking and I feel secure. My body is a shield to protect me as I work hard at working out important matters.

There are other ways Hamlet and I are similar, like our love for acting, but the two I mentioned are the most important.

Hamlet and I differ probably most in our speech. I don't think I could ever talk like that. Another difference is how we treat women. He was rude to Ophelia. I would have treated her with more respect and shown more kindness.

In the second question I asked students to comment on how Hamlet might be told in a modern setting (and situation). Some said it could not be done:

Hamlet could not have been written in modern times. The core of the play is revenge. If revenge took place in today's society, the play would turn into more of a murder mystery than a psychological and literary masterpiece.

If the play was written today, it would have probably been adapted for the screen as a "mad slasher" film. If the ghost was written in it would be totally implausible for today's audience. If the ghost was written out, it would make the whole play implausible.

One student ignored the problem neatly:

If Hamlet was living in 1985, I think he would be looked upon as having a psychological problem. People today are afraid of people who have mental problems. Their reaction is to hide them from society or lock them away. With Hamlet's mental disorder, the way he acted towards other people, he would be put into an asylum for people who were mentally disturbed.

The following example reveals a lot about both Hamlet's and our time:

If Hamlet took place in modern day, the length of plays would be a lot shorter. The norms of that time period permitted a lot of behavior that just wouldn't happen today with impunity. In those days, the common law was "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," while the expression remains, this system of justice is absurd. Moreover, if Hamlet was written today the deaths would stop at the King. The modern day Hamlet would probably shoot Claudius rather than stab him. His gun would have a silencer attachment and be from the black market—therefore nearly impossible to trace. Let's face it; this is a rich kid; he can afford to send the very best. People aren't as quick to take lives now as then. In those days it was a point of honor to defend one's name, even if it meant death.

And so does this one!

To set Hamlet in modern day America would have a great effect on the play. Hamlet, if he would have been suspicioned by his uncle, the "President," to plot against him, he probably would not have come as far as he did in the play. If he wanted to kill his uncle in today's setting, he would have to be much more subtle and quiet about the whole deal.

Yet, if the people would have known about it (those of present day America) they would have supported him, his uncle-even as President-could not

have suppressed the press's inquiring eyes and ears, and Hamlet would have been the star of every morning network news show. He would not have been able to kill him, but he would have been able to oust him from the "White House" and rid the country of shame.

Finally two contrasting examples, one very short and the other quite long:

I personally feel that bringing the play Hamlet to modern day times would do great injustice to it. So much in this play depends on the time period it takes place in. First of all I wonder if Hamlet would believe he even saw a ghost. If he didn't believe, that would ruin the play right there. Hamlet's family would probably be rich oil tycoons. The killing would be done with guns not swords. Old Hamlet would have been killed with poison but the kind of poison that doesn't show up in the deceased's body. I also wonder if Hamlet would be so dead-set to avenge his father. Ophelia would have killed herself by overdosing and Polonius would be chief director of the CIA.

The long example shows that the student knows a lot about Hamlet and modern media:

If Hamlet were to be placed in modern day America, there would be a whole mess of changes. One change would be that the police would be involved in the murder. Hamlet, in the original play, had to play dumb to a lot of people so they wouldn't know what he was up to. If the play were put into today's time, Hamlet would have to play dumb to the police as well. You know how tricky police are. If Kojak, Starsky and Hutch, or T.J. Hooker were put on the case, Hamlet would have to watch his step.

Another change would be how shocked Hamlet was when his mother, the Queen married again so quickly. Today, that would be accepted. This is due in part to how women have changed since then. Hamlet's mother would probably be more independent and wouldn't be so useless as she is in the original play.

Also, if the play were put into modern day America, Hamlet would probably be put away. If he acted as crazy as he does in the old times, he would have been put in an asylum somewhere. Or, the King would either have framed him or put him away when he worried that Hamlet was going to blow the whistle on him.

Another effect that the time change would have on the play would be the position that everyone would have. Instead of the story being centered around the tragedies of royalty, the story would probably be about the tragedies of a mafia family. Hamlet's father would have been the Godfather. Hamlet's uncle bumped off Hamlet's pop so he could enjoy the wealth and shacked-up with Hamlet's mom. Hamlet is next in line for the head of the family. Hamlet, a dreamer, would be doing a couple lines one night and see a ghost who tells him that he is his pop. The ghost tells Hamlet what went down and Hamlet is out for blood. If what I've mentioned so far doesn't come through clear enough, check the theatres or TV because there are a lot of films that could show you what Hamlet of the 80's would look like.

My third question called for students to rewrite the play into a short story and to give Hamlet the ability to act on impulse. All thirty-five or so stories were interesting in their own ways, but I have picked five examples to share that illustrate the varied directions students went with the story.

Example 1

In the early morning Horatio and Marcellus came upon their admired friend Hamlet. They were excited with news of the unexpected. Apparently, they had seen a ghost—the ghost of Hamlet's father. When Hamlet confronts this ghost he is told that his father was killed by the present king.

Hamlet stood a moment in disbelief; he was awestruck. His uncle has killed his father in order to find his place on the throne, next to his mother. It was on the throne that Claudius died. In a mad rage, Hamlet had returned to the king's quarters and immediately slain him.

This student, of course, went for the "short" in "short story." The second one emphasizes the acting on impulse:

Example 2

For the past two nights a ghost has appeared to the night watchmen. They don't know what to make of it. They believe it bears a resemblance to the late king who died just two months ago, but they aren't sure because they never saw him. They summon a friend, Horatio, who knows what the late king looked like. When the ghost appears to him and tries to speak, but doesn't, he knows he must tell Hamlet. Hamlet comes out to their watch with them the next night to wait for the ghost to appear. When the ghost does appear it beckons Hamlet and he follows.

The ghost tells Hamlet that he is the spirit of his father and proceeds to tell him how he was murdered.

"Murdered!" Hamlet exclaims.

The ghost goes on to tell him that Claudius was the murderer.

"My uncle!" Hamlet exclaims once again. "I will avenge thee father!"

Hamlet is stark raving mad. He can't believe it. His dear father that he loved so much was murdered by his sly disgusting uncle.

"That foul beast, I will kill the bloody bastard!" Hamlet screams as he makes his way to the castle. As Hamlet bursts into the castle he sees his uncle sitting on the throne. When Claudius sees Hamlet, he is astounded. Hamlet has gone crazy. Hamlet dashes up to the throne and before anyone can stop him, plunges his sword deep into Claudius' side.

"This is for my father!!"

In example three the story is short, but the nature of the tragedy has changed drastically:

Example 3

One night two guards, Marcellus and Bernardo, were visited by the ghost of a recently murdered king, but when they tell their friend Horatio about it he wouldn't believe them. So the next night Horatio accompanied the two guards and sure enough the ghost appeared again. Well Horatio decided that they had best tell the dead king's son, Hamlet. When Hamlet was told of the occurrences, he too wanted to see for himself. So on the third night, when the ghost appeared, Hamlet confronted it and it told him that his father had been murdered by his uncle who was nov the king. The ghost asks Hamlet to avenge his soul and he readily agrees, knowing that he must do it for his father. So Hamlet goes back to the castle to wait for the prime opportunity to kill his

Uncle Claudius. Eventually Hamlet happens upon Claudius praying with his head turned from Hamlet. Quickly seizing the opportunity, Hamlet draws his sword and beheads his uncle from behind. He then banishes his mother and after explaining the murder to the people of his country appoints himself king.

Example four includes the play-within-the-play but otherwise does not go into great detail:

Example 4

Hamlet, the son of the deceased king of Denmark, has found out about his father's mysterious death, and plans his revenge. He must get Claudius alone, to kill him, all alone. Claudius is at fault, and must be punished.

Hamlet decides to stage a play, when the king, and his wife Gertrude (Hamlet's mother) are invited. Oh, but of course the others will be there too—the courtiers, the advisors;—so how will he deal with them?

The King and Queen come, and so did the rest of the court. Hamlet had devised a plan, while everyone was seated, and the play began,—the king noticed that Hamlet was no where to be seen, so he asked one of the players where Hamlet was? They said he had received a message at the gate and had told the players to proceed.

The King and the rest sat back, and watched the play begin, but as the actors were beginning to fill the stage, Hamlet rushed in, went directly to the King, and whispered something in his ear.

Upon this the King immediately got up, and followed Hamlet out the door—telling the rest to remain and watch the play.

Now, as the King and Hamlet were proceeding to the near gate, Hamlet told him of a messenger who had a message from the King of Poland, saying that Hamlet's father had been killed by Claudius.

They stopped dead in their tracks. Claudius was dumbfounded—he didn't know what to say—he asked Hamlet how such an absurd thing could be said. Hamlet replied to the King the exact way that his father's ghost had said how Claudius killed him. Claudius became white as a sheet, stuttering as he tried to come up with something to say, but Hamlet had already pulled his dagger. And it was all over.

Example five puts the emphasis on blood, gore, and insanity, things which are surely ever-present in today's popular media:

Example 5

At midnight, Bernardo came to relieve Francisco of his guard duty. As they bid each other goodnight, Marcellus and Horatio showed up. Bernardo and Marcellus began speaking of the ghost that had appeared two nights in a row. Horatio, of course, didn't believe a word of it. Just as they began explaining it to Horatio the ghost appeared again. Horatio was afraid, but he still charged the apparition to speak, and it was offended and stalked away, as Bernardo and Marcellus were quick to note. All three were amazed at the ghost's likeness to their old king, who had died of snakebite. Once more, the ghost appeared and this time appeared about to speak when suddenly, the rooster crowed and the ghost took its leave again. The three of them decided they had better tell Hamlet of this and the next night Hamlet stood watch with Horatio and Marcellus. The ghost came, right on schedule, and told Hamlet how his incestuous, adulterous beast of an uncle had murdered his father. Hamlet was immediately enraged; he stormed down the stairs to the king's chambers

screaming "I'm going to kill that dirty incestuous, murdering son of a bitch!" However, it took him nearly an hour trying to find the bastard, and when he did the new king was being bathed by two gorgeous Sicilian sponge bathers. "It wouldn't be too easy to kill him right here and now, since he has purged his soul thus" Hamlet thought. Then, acting on impulse, he said "Oh, what the hell" and hacked the king's head off with one swipe of his sword. The blood geysered all the way to the ceiling as the head thumped the tiled floor. The spongers, now sensing danger, left immediately and the gaurds in the room, frozen by shock, watched as Hamlet cut the twitching corpse into little pieces. Finally, the gaurds restrained Hamlet and took him to the Hospital for the Criminal Insane from which he now rules Denmark.

So what do all of these examples prove? Probably nothing conclusively, but I do think they show that students can improve their understanding of Shakespeare by writing and re-writing Shakespeare. They learn how good his writing really is and how impossible it is to destroy him even with parody. Finally, they learn a lot about themselves and their times, and they are involved with Shakespeare! We mad teachers keep trying different methods to teach Shakespeare, and where there's effort there's hope, but the difficulties remain.

Difficulty of Teaching Shakespeare

I'm sure we all grow a little weary in hearing and reading stupendous success stories which imply that the speaker/writer has the final solution to the Shakespeare "Teaching Problem." I sometimes get the impression of miraculous teachers able to teach Shakespeare to everyone in a surefire way. I have tried not to appear to be the person with the process in this essay. My final advise is let Shakespeare come through by not getting in his way too much as a teacher. Don't overteach! And finally, I agree with Veidemanis that "it is impossible to avoid the recognition that both the teaching and studying of Shakespeare are exacting, often frustrating, necessitating thorough, perceptive, informal study, for which there are no painless shortcuts or easy formulas." (p. 55)

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Helping High School Students Examine The Complexities Of Hamlet Through The Writing Process

by
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One of the most disturbing results of the 1979-80 National Assessment of Educational Progress was the statement that students are generally unable to support or explain their interpretations and responses to literature in any but the most superficial ways. Students can make claims about their reading and offer some evidence, but rarely do they provide warrants or explanations of how the evidence supports their claims. They assume that the jump from claim to explanation is obvious and that it need not be written. In Writing About Literature (ERIC/NCTE:1984) Elizabeth A. Kahn, Carolyn Calhoun Walter, and Larry R. Johannessen suggest designing a sequence of pre-reading and pre-writing activities which will encourage students to learn to support and explain their interpretations and responses to literature. Using their exercises as a guide, we have developed a series of lessons for teaching Hamlet to high school seniors.

One of our goals in teaching Hamlet has always been to have students discover the complexity of the issues in the play. We hoped to create a teaching plan that would help students discover these issues for themselves and to begin to make some informed judgments about them. Our plan includes a pre-reading activity that asks students to confront some basic questions, take a position on each of them, and discuss and defend their positions with their peers. After a reading of the play (using several methods, including teacher reading, commercial tapes, and selected student reading) students are asked to find specific evidence from the play to support the claim that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were (or were not) justified in their actions. Then follows a warrant worksheet which asks students to explain how the evidence they have chosen supports their claim. There is an optional worksheet on whether Hamlet was or was not justified in killing the king, which again asks students to cite evidence for their position and explain how the evidence justifies their claims. This could lead to a writing assignment or could be used as a discussion topic.

The next activities deal with Hamlet's values. Students are asked to rank Hamlet's most important and least important values, to cite evidence to support their claims, and then to convince their classmates that their positions are correct. When they have finished this activity they are asked to examine Hamlet's attitude or state of mind in his first soliloquy. "O, that this too, too

solid flesh..." (1,2,129), to state their claims, and to plan their evidence and justification. Finally, they are asked to write an essay which traces the possible changes in Hamlet's attitude or state of mind through his soliloquys and major speeches. They are asked to plan the essay first by gathering evidence and justifying their positions. They will then revise their essays by working with peer groups. The worksheets themselves have been included at the end of this article. We hope that such a plan will help students to understand not only the complexities of Hamlet, but the importance of logical responses to issues in their own lives.

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TO DO OR NOT TO DO: OPINIONNARIE

OBJECTIVES:

1. Based on the idea that students have opinions, this activit uses those opinions to create interest in the work.
2. This pre-reading activity is designed to foster interactio between the individual readers and an individual literary work: Hamlet.
3. It is keyed to specific interpretive problems in the play and asks students to agree or disagree with statements.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Before you begin the reading assignment, complete the following opinionnaire, marking true or false in the space provided beside each.
2. Be prepared to discuss your opinions or claims in clas tomorrow, ready to support your claims and challenge the claims of other students.

T or

1. It is never right to kill another person. _____
2. It is better to suffer whatever life brings than to commit suicide. _____
3. There are acceptable reasons for lying to your friends. _____
4. Our lives are preordained. _____
5. Leaders usually act in the best interest of their countries. _____
6. People should never compromise their ideals or beliefs. _____
7. No cause, political or otherwise, is worth dying for. _____
8. Suicide is always wrong. _____
9. Murder can be justified. _____
10. We are not in control of our destinies. _____
11. Sexual passion motivates the behavior of young people more than it does the behavior of their parents' generation. _____
12. It is better to act quickly than to be indecisive. _____
13. At times it is appropriate to sacrifice self for a greater good. _____
14. It is never safe to rely solely on the advice of people whose lives you have power over. _____
15. If someone murders your father, you can justify killing that person. _____
16. It is better to weigh all sides of an issue before taking any action. _____

HAMLET Worksheet II. A.

EVIDENCE EXTRACT

OBJECTIVES:

1. To provide opportunity to evaluate evidence for a literary text to determine if it is specific enough.
2. to provide opportunity to revise evidence that is inspecific or incorrect.
3. To generate evidence to support a claim.

DIRECTIONS:

1. Read the following two Evidence Extracts and evaluate them in the following ways:

   A. For each paper, identify any statments that you believe are incorrect or do not support the author's viewpoint expressed in the claim. Explain the problems you find.

   B. Determine which statements on each paper present specific evidence. Explain your reasons.

   C. Determine which statements are not specific enough; explain your reasons.

   D. Select the paper that presents the viewpoint with which you agree. For that paper, rewrite each statement that is not specific enough so that it is a good specific examp

   E. Write two additional examples that provide good, specific evidence to support your claim about whether or not Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are justified in their action

HAMLET Worksheet II. B

Sample
Evidence Extract

Student: Jim

Claim: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were justified in their actions.

1. They are obeying the King's orders. Act 2 li 36
   Act 4 Sc 2 li 27

2. They think Hamlet might realy be insane.
   Act 3 Sc 3 li 122

3. They believed the King. Act 4 Sc 1 li 33-3

4. They expect favors in return--"such thanks as fits a king's remembrance." Act 2 Sc 2 li 25

5. They think they can help Hamlet.
   By "draw(ing) him on to pleasures." Act 2 Sc 2 li 1
   they hope to be "pleasant and helpful to him!
   Act 2 Sc 2 li 3

* *

Sample
Evidence Extract

Student: Jane

Claim: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not justified in their actions.

1. They expect favors in return. Act 2 Sc 2 li 25

2. They take advantage of their old friend.
   Act 2 Sc 2 li 247

3. They lie when they tell Hamlet that they are at Elsinon "To visit you, my lord, no other occasion."
   Act 2 Sc 2 li 279

4. They act in their own interest, while pretending to act in Hamlets interest. Act 3 Sc 4 li 202+

5. They use devious methods. Act 4 Sc 3 li 55-6.

HAMLET Worksheet III. A.

WARRANT WORKOUT

OBJECTIVES:

1. Because students often omit warrants or explanations, and assume that the evidence speaks for itself, this activity focuses on writing warrants to show the connection between the evidence and their claim.

EXAMPLE:

Claim: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were not justified in acti as they did.

Evidence: When Hamlet asks them why they have come to Elsinore they respond, "To visit you, my lord, no other occasion

Warrant: They do not reveal the fact that they have been invit by the king to "gather" information about Hamlet. This concealing of a hidden purpose makes their statement t Hamlet a lie; certainly friends are not justfied in su behavior. (or, This lie is one thing that shows them be unjustified in their behavior. or There is no justification for such behavior among friends.)

DIRECTIONS:

1. On the attached sheet, state your viewpoint or claim on the issue of whether Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are justified in their actions.

   The following evidence might be used to argue either side of this issue. After thinking about how the other side woul use this evidence, write a warrant for each that explains how this evidence supports your claim (conclusion) about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern's behavior.

   A. They are old friends of Hamlet. II,2,247

   B. They will be paid for their efforts. II,2,25

2. Look back at your answers in "Evidence Extract." Find the two pieces of new evidence you wrote on your own to support your viewpoint. Rewrite each of these examples and then write a warrant that explains how each supports your conclusion about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

HAMLET Worksheet III. B.
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WARRANT WORKOUT

CLAIM: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern _____
in acting as they did.

EVIDENCE: A.

WARRANT:

EVIDENCE: B.

WARRANT:

EVIDENCE:

WARRANT:

EVIDENCE:

WARRANT:

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PLANNING SHEET

In HAMLET, Hamlet struggles with the question of killing his father. After completing the reading of the play, what is your viewpoint on the the issue of whether Hamlet is justified in killing Claudius. Plan (and write, optional) a persuasive composition arguing your viewpoint on this issue.

THESIS (State your viewpoint or claim on the above issue and briefly explain your reasons):

ORGANIZATION	EVIDENCE	WARRANTS

CONCLUSION:

List your evidence in the evidence column. Explain in the warrants column how the evidence supports your claim and reasons. Look at the order of your reasons in the thesis. Place numbers in the organization column to indicate the order that evidences and warrants should appear i your paper.

HAMLET WORKSHEET V

VALUES PROFILE

Character: Hamlet

_____ 1. Acceptance (approval from others)
_____ 2. Acceptance of one's destiny
_____ 3. Achievement
_____ 4. Aesthetics
_____ 5. Altruism
_____ 6. Autonomy
_____ 7. Companionship (friendship)
_____ 8. Health
_____ 9. Honesty
_____10. Creativity
_____11. Justice
_____12. Knowledge
_____13. Love
_____14. Loyalty
_____15. Morality
_____16. Physical Appearance
_____17. Pleasure
_____18. Power
_____19. Recognition
_____20. Religious Faith
_____21. Self-Respect
_____22. Skill
_____23. Wealth

Rank in order (1,2,3) the values most important to Hamlet and the values least important to Hamlet(4,5,6), with one being the highest and six the lowest.

HAMLET WORKSHEET VI

VALUES PROFILE ACTIVITY SHEET

CHARACTER: HAMLET

A. Thesis: Explain what Hamlet values most
or
Explain Hamlet's change in values

B. What are Hamlet's top three values? (If changes occur, also list the top three after the change.)

C. Give evidence for the top value. (If there is a change, give evidence separately for the top value both before and after.)

D. In a sentence or two, explain *how* the evidence in C supports your thesis.

E. Give evidence to show that 2 and 3 are less important than 1.

F. In a sentence or two, explain how the evidence in E supports your point.

After students have completed this exercise, they are asked to write on a small slip of paper their names and what they think is Hamlet's most important value (before and after the change if they think there is one). Students are then assigned to groups based on their selections. The groups are then given time to find evidence to support their positions, with emphasis on preparing rebuttal arguments for one or more of the other possible viewpoints.

Two opposite groups are pitted against each other. Each is given three minutes to present its case. Each is then given a few minutes to prepare rebuttal arguments and evidence; and then the class discusses and votes on which group won the debate. This activity gives students the chance to refute opposite views and convince a real audience of their viewpoints.

HAMLET Worksheet VII

DIRECTIONS:
Consider Hamlet's soliloquy which begins,
"O that this too, too solid flesh" I,2,129.

1. What is Hamlet's attitude or state of mind in this soliloquy?
2. Cite evidence to support your claim about his attitude.
3. Write warrants to show how the evidence from the speech suppor your claim.

CLAIM: (State your viewpoint and briefly state reasons for your opi

Sketch a PLANNING SHEET below, following the form on the preceding w

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HAMLET Worksheet VIII

PROMPT: In a well-constructed essay, trace the possible changes in Hamlet's attitude or state of mind through his soliloquys and major speeches.

Begin your evidence extract and warrants on this sheet.

Is the Study of MACBETH in the Senior Year: A "Dagger of the Mind?"

by
James Christopher Davis

Some high school seniors feel that the study of MACBETH is some kind of "dagger of the mind." However, as a second year teacher, I think that MACBETH in the senior year is a classic combination that works well to help these young adults develop an appreciation and love for Shakespeare that may stay with them for the rest of their lives. The language of the play is formidable for them at first, but this is overcome with practice--as the students perform, study, think and write about the play. A multiplicity of methods should be used to help and guide students through this bloody, mystical tragedy.

Last year, my first year of teaching, I used what could be called the MACBETH Overkill Method--go over and over the play as many different ways as possible. We studied each act individually in a pattern of learning activities. First, the students were given an act of the play as assigned reading. The next day was spent performing the act in class with discussion and lecture. Then we listened to the act from a recording--the students were required to read along. Next, I handed out a plot outline of the act and reviewed it with the students; a quiz proceeded. This pattern was repeated through the five acts of the play. The next step was to see a movie of the play, followed by a review and a final test. This test was composed entirely of questions submitted by students, involving them in their own learning process. My assessment of this "Overkill" method is that those who liked it, liked it; those who didn't, didn't. Some students appeared to be extremely motivated throughout the study of the play and enjoyed going over and over it; some could not wait until we moved on to something else. All in all, my impression was that we had a successful experience with Shakespeare.

This year I wanted to do things differently, but I also wanted the teaching and learning of MACBETH to be successful for the seniors. I decided to use a method that could be called the All at Once Approach--attack the play in its entirety, not as fragmented acts. First, we performed or listened to the play, one act per day with discussion and lecture. The students were allowed to decide by majority vote what method would be used. Finishing the act was the assigned reading for the next day. I requested that students bring in questions on their own about the play, but most seemed reluctant. After we finished the play, we saw the movie, and I lectured on the history of the play. The

last step was reviewing, then final testing. As last year, the test was student designed, which involves the students in their own learning, and which allows the teacher to see what the students have learned from the play. That benefit is combined with another benefit of this method--students act as a democracy to decide upon the strategy for study of the play; they choose their own teaching method, making their experience with the play more successful.

Let me give you an example from this year's teaching. My first three classes of the day are Senior English classes. The first period class is a mixed group--some are outgoing, and some are shy. The second period class loves to participate--they are extremely outgoing. However, the third period class is just the opposite; they are extremely shy--it is painful for them to answer questions in class, and I have to pull and drag responses out of them. The first period class chose to hear some of the play, then perform the rest of it, which served their mixed nature well. Those who wanted to perform were given the opportunity, and those who wanted to hear some of the play had the chance. The second period class volunteered to perform the play. In fact, I was swamped with people trying to get parts before class began each morning. This method worked well with them, because everyone who wanted to participate got to, and they were reading Shakespeare quite well by the end. Although two or three seemed to want to perform the play, the third period class chose to hear it. One girl said that she wanted to listen to it, because it made the play more exciting. By hearing it, we actually got through it more quickly, so there was more time for discussion. This method of studying the play as a whole and allowing the students to choose the method of involvement with the play seemed to work extremely well with almost all of the students. I sensed a positive atmosphere in the day to day proceedings, and the students seemed to be very involved with the play.

I want students to get as excited by Shakespeare as I am, not feel it is a "dagger of the mind." I love to read, study, hear, and especially, teach Shakespeare--and I try to communicate and transfer this to students, that they may someday be able to say they love Shakespeare too. At any rate, I do feel the key for students to unlock the mysteries of MACBETH, or any play of Shakespeare's, is to go through the play more than once in class, using a variety of teaching strategies along the way.

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THE TEACHING OF SHAKESPEARE: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

by
Patricia Scott

I began teaching a unit on Shakespeare in my Introduction to Fine Arts course several years ago, when the university presented a production of Othello. My goal was not to present Shakespeare as literature, but instead to emphasize the performance aspect of his plays. I did, however, want my students to read the plays closely in order to understand plot construction, character development, and the use of imagery. Reading and discussing the play and attending a performance did not go for enough for me, so I decided to use another approach.

I have found that the best way to to get students to read the plays with more understanding is to use an interdisciplinary approach. By this I mean, to compare and contrast our reading of the script with a presentation of the play in another medium. The two comparisons that have been most successful are Othello and Verdi's Otello and Romeo and Juliet and Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet. I have also used King Lear, a performance of the play at the university and Olivier's television version. And this year I am having the class read Henry V and comparing it to Olivier's innovative film.

The approach I use is based on Aristotle's principles of play construction; that one analyzes plot, character, thought, language, song, and spectacle as the essential parts of a drama. First, I have the students read the play in question and we discuss the six parts. I present differing critical opinions and interpretations of these and attempt to have the students begin to formulate their ideas of what is happening, whom it is happening to, why it is happening, and how Shakespeare presents this in a theatrical manner. I do present information on the Elizabethan stage, acting conventions, and examples of other plays from the period. At the end of the discussion we isolate an idea that seems to be central to our understanding of the play. (I have found that different classes come to different conclusions about this!)

The next step is to view or listen to the work in question in another medium. We pay close attention to what changes have been made in the plot, characters, and language. We discuss the unique properties of the medium in question. For instance, what limitations does the medium of opera impose upon the plot or how does the use of a real environment in a film change how the story is presented? We also look at what is left out, all of Act I in Verdi's Otello, for example. Does this change how we react to Otello and Iago, does it make the plot tighter, or does this change the meaning of the play? The focus of the discussion is always on whether or not the idea that we isolated in our study of the play holds up in the more modern version. Verdi's opera emphasizes the contrast between good and evil more clearly, and Zeffirelli's Romeo and Juliet is much more violent than the original script would indicate, but the idea in each version remains intact.

Next, I assign a take home exam that first asks some rather specific questions about changes in action, dialogue, environment, etc. At this point, the class usually

wants to go back to the Shakespeare script and re-read and re-discuss it. The last part of the exam typically focuses on the interpretations of the artists involved and asks the students to draw conclusions about how artists of different periods present the same material.

As a result of this approach, I have found that students read the plays much more closely and understand their essentially theatrical nature more deeply. The plays were originally written to be performed, not read, and I find that this approach allows the student to more clearly see and understand what this means. We discuss how Zeffirelli literally uses the image of hands to visually present the relationship between Romeo and Juliet and how this visual image enhances our understanding of the words and the relationship without violating the idea that Shakespeare communicated in his play.

This approach is not the usual way in which Shakespeare is presented and may not appeal to the traditional Shakespeare scholar, but I have found that students respond to it and seem to understand the plays in a more profound way. At first, I usually get the response that Shakespeare is boring, incomprehensible, and irrelevant to their modern lives. By the time we finish the unit, the students appreciate Shakespeare, even if they still do not number his plays among their "top ten," and usually feel that they have accomplished something in the process, namely, that they are able to isolate an idea in a work of art and articulate how it "works," how the artists communicate to their audiences. This, to be sure, does not make anyone into a Shakespeare scholar, but it does give the students a sense of the significance of a work of art and they can analyze the work and write about it in a meaningful way.

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AMERICAN STUDENTS AND ENGLISH POLITICS: THE CASE OF SHAKESPEARE'S HENRY IV PART I

by

Hassell B. Sledd

In American classrooms, far from the world of Shakespeare's plays, students and teachers are apt to forget that the politics of Shakespeare's day was a matter of recurrent concern in his plays. For example, we disregard the succession to the throne of England, which, unsettled during most of Elizabeth's reign, was a subject of great political interest to her people, and we forget that the succession was perhaps one of the major considerations underlying Shakespeare's history plays. We teachers may well be entitled to forget it. After all, it is difficult to help students reading a few of the plays, and most of them for the first time, to see larger matters such as this. In Henry IV Part I, one of the plays frequently taught in American classrooms, Shakespeare deals at length with long-term politics, or the way England in the 1590s came to be the way it was. In classroom discussion of this play political matters are frequently slighted in the rush to talk about Falstaff, Hotspur, and Prince Hal, but attention paid to English politics will help students make sense of the characters and the action of the play. In particular, attention paid to English politics will help to clarify the issues concerning Hal, the central figure in the play. The ambiguities in his handling of his responsibilities as man and as heir to the throne present to young people some of the complexities inherent in any response to power. Because young people today must learn to deal with power probably much as young people learned four centuries ago, Henry IV Part I is not so distant from American classrooms after all.

Long-term politics or history is revealed in several ways in Henry IV Part I. It appears first as the transference of power from feudal lords, each supreme in his own part of the country, to the monarch, who operates from London. At the beginning of the play King Henry, not yet secure on the throne he has taken from King Richard, is challenged by forces from the west and the north: he must overcome the challenge of Owen Glendower, the leader of the revolt of the Welsh, and he must also repel the attack of the Scots, who are led by Archibald, Earl of Douglas. King Henry is aided by the great baron of the north of England, the Earl of Northumberland, who, with his brother the Earl of Worcester, helped King Henry depose King Richard; King Henry is also helped by Harry Hotspur, Northumberland's son, and by Hotspur's brother-in-law and Glendower's son-in-law Edmund Mortimer, who is called the legitimate heir to King Richard's throne. (I.iii. 156-57. Citations are to The Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).) Then before the play is a half-hour old those who aided King Henry leave him to join his attackers.

This is more than a bit confusing to students who know nothing about English history. One way to reduce the confusion is to point out that the King in London must meet and overcome forces from Wales in the west, led by Glendower; from the north, led by Hotspur, and from Scotland, led by Douglas. Maps are useful. So are analogies with events in the United States with which students presumably are familiar, such as

the secession of South Carolina in 1861 or the politer struggle among the states to persuade General Motors to locate its Saturn plant where the jobs would do the most good. At least these recent events help students to understand that regionalism is an eternal factor in politics and that it explains in part the disposition of the opposing forces in Henry IV Part I.

It is apparent that Douglas, Glendower, and Hotspur function as representatives of regions of Britain. But students must be cautioned that there is more to Glendower than his representation of Wales, more to Douglas than his standing for Scotland, and that the characters in a play not only represent regions or ideas but function as more or less morally responsible human beings, depending for their humanity upon the combined skills of playwright, director and actor. Students need to be reminded that in reading a play, one looks at several ways in which a character represents something in order to see how that character functions as a human being.

Before the rebels can fight the King, there is a meeting of Glendower, Hotspur, and Mortimer to divide the Kingdom that they feel certain they will win (III. i.). They look at a map of England and Wales and name the rivers that will mark the boundaries of the new political units. The specific names and geography they imply do not matter as much as the fact of division: the plans to divide the kingdom show that, should these regional leaders become independent rulers, each will take his power to himself and go his own way with it. To a London audience, dependent for its livelihood on London's dominance over trade with other cities, such independence would be an unthinkable calamity. To American students a division of the kingdom of England is of slight if any concern, but they are aware of good guys and bad guys, and many of them can be presumed to decide that the rebels are the bad guys who should be defeated in the shoot out at the end of the play, while most of the rest will decide that the rebels are the good guys and should win. Almost all of them need to be reminded that, first, whether the rebels are good or bad, the play follows history and so the rebels will be defeated; second, the attempt to divide the kingdom helps to justify the rebel's defeat, but the rebellion itself is presented as having considerable justification, and it certainly does not by itself turn the rebels into bad guys; and last, among the rebels there are several who are admirable and attractive. To put the matter bluntly, Shakespeare was not interested in good guys and bad guys; in this play he was interested in people and their responses to power, and he was using long-term politics to show people in action.

Later while looking at the map the rebels almost fight over the size of their shares of the kingdom: Hotspur feels that a bend in the river which marks the boundary between his portion of the kingdom and Mortimer's will deprive him of his fair share of good bottom land, and he therefore proposes to redirect the course of the river. This proposal is challenged by Glendower, and he and Hotspur almost come to blows while Mortimer tries to calm them down. Again, the specifics of the argument matter less than the implication that, should these barons divide the country, there will soon be civil war—again, an unthinkable calamity. But the incident also shows these people in action. In it Hotspur appears to confuse symbols and reality, Glendower to give an absurdly serious response to an absurd proposal, and Mortimer, the legitimate heir to the throne of England, to be absurdly ineffectual. There is a suggestion that, should these gentlemen come to power, they would govern like the Three Stooges.

Another way in which long-term politics is revealed in Henry IV Part I is in the shift from the magic-dominated world of Glendower, who may be seen as carrying with him the Celtic past of Britain, to the world of reason and realism that London in the 1590's took itself to be. The magic by which Glendower lives is presented as, by turns, comic, lovely, and dangerous. It is comic in the exchanges between Glendower and

Hotspur before they plan to divide the kingdom. Glendower claims that there were earthquakes and fiery shapes in the sky at the time of his birth; Hotspur tells him that these same signs would have appeared if his mother's cat had had kittens, though Glendower had never been born. Angered, Glendower says that he can call spirits from the vasty deep. To this Hotspur replies, "Why, so can I, or so can any man;/But will they come when you do call them?" (iii.i. 53-54). This exchange reveals Glendower as an outraged sputterer and Hotspur as an outspoken and amusing but also arrogant young hothead.

Later, when Glendower calls in musicians from a thousand league's distance to accompany his daughter's song, which is the evening's entertainment for the noble young men, the magic adds a lovely touch of the "olden days" of chivalry to the play. But toward the end of the play, after Glendower is reported as being "overrul'd by prophecies" (IV. i. 18) and refusing to send his forces or go himself to the battle which will decide the outcome of the rebellion, he ceases to be a force in the play, and with his fading, magic loses its importance and disappears. There is no clap of thunder or flourish of trumpets to mark its passing from the lives of the Englishmen on the stage; they simply rush on to the next event in their struggle for power. But in this disappearance of magic and in the character's hard-headed pursuit of their ends, we can see the Londoners of the 1590s coming to be the way they thought they were: realistic, outspoken, down to earth and, of course, successful.

If we see England at the end of the sixteenth century becoming itself in the passing of power from feudal lords to a central authority and in the shift from a magic-dominated to a more nearly reality-oriented world, we also see England becoming itself in the shift from the chivalric world of armored knights slaughtering foot soldiers and brutalizing each other in order to gain honor and ransom, to a world in which there would be good fellowship between high and low, safety for commerce, and honesty among those in office. In this new world, if there had to be a war, it would be fought not mainly for honor or ransom but for the goals pursued by men who considered themselves to be clear-headed realists; that is, for power and safety.

Hotspur is the main representative of the chivalric world. He is an excellent fighter who at the beginning of the play has defeated Douglas and the Scots and taken many prisoners for whose release he expects to be paid a great amount of ransom. But he is also exceptionally hot-tempered, and he refuses to give up the prisoners to the King when, wounded and exhausted at the end of the battle, he is told by a foppish young man straight from the court that the prisoners belong to the King and must be sent to him—presumably for ransom. Later in the play, when the King accuses Hotspur's brother-in-law Mortimer of willfully betraying the men whom he was supposed to lead against Glendower, Hotspur loses his temper in a spectacular revelation of his obsession with honor. Still later it becomes clear that Hotspur looks at fighting as if it were a sport; he is eager to fight even when the odds are against him; he can not abide the praise of another man, apparently because such praise lessens his reputation; and he is an admirable lover, as shown by Lady Percy's reaction to him. He is an attractive young hothead, this Hotspur, and perhaps a good man to lead troops or a football team, but hardly a man to entrust with the government of a country: too hot-tempered, too concerned for honor, too willing to risk everything on one battle. In his defeat by Harry, Prince of Wales, at the end of the play is represented the shift from chivalry to hard-headed practicality. This shift is more nearly basic to the play than the shift of power and certainly more important that the shift from magic, if only because it is manifested in the opposition of Hotspur to Hal, who is the center of the play.

The play is not named for Prince Hal, its central character, but for a king whose part is rather brief and who is certinly not the center of the action. Perhaps The Historie of Henrie the Fourth, as the first quatro is titled, was named as it is in

order to distinguish it from an earlier play, The Famous Victories of Henry V, which tells the life story of Prince Hal. In any case Henry IV is mainly a father figure from whose cold, calculating policies Hal is attempting to distance himself. Since Shakespeare seems to have carefully planned Henry IV Part I, its predecessor Richard II, and its sequels Henry IV Part II and Henry V as elements in a series, the best thing we can do is pay attention to the play and disregard the title.

What kind of person is Hal? We see him first as a roisterer, a boon companion, a madcap who will pretend to be a thief in order to play a joke on Falstaff. He is more at home in a tavern joking with assorted lowlifes than in a castle or on a battlefied. But unlike Hotspur, he is a master of words and the ways they represent reality, a man who does not let words got the better of him. He never lets Falstaff make him promise to pay more than he expects to pay. For example, when Falstaff suggests that Hal make him a judge after Hal becomes king, Hal tells him that he shall become a hangman. Hal is honest about money, for he returns the money that Falstaff steals from the travelers, and to it he adds "advantage," or interest. He can be straightforward and serious at the proper time, as he is when he tells the audience that he will throw off his loose behavior in order to pay the debt he never promised—that is, in order to be a good king—and again when he tells his father that he will take all Hotspur's honors from him, or die. Unlike Hotspur, he can praise another man, for he praises Hotspur before the Battle of Shrewsbury and, to save lives, offers to fight him in single combat. He is not cold-bloodedly ambitious, for on the battlefield he saves his father's life. He is willing to share honor, for after the battle he generously consents to Falstaff's lie that Falstaff killed Hotspur. Where Hotspur is hot tempered, reckless, overbearing, and arrogant, Hal is cool, cautious, informal without being familiar, and serious about weighty matters without being solemn about anything.

If Hotspur represents old-fashioned chivalry, then Hal can be taken to represent the 1590's idea of the successful monarch in training. But his words and actions are formed so that they lead to two ways of looking at him—first, as the youthful version of the ideal warrior King who will unite the men of all ranks and regions in Great Britain into one powerful army and with it conquer half of France; second, as a calculating politician who uses his friends to learn how to manage people, whose honesty is prudence, who praises other in order to increase his own praise, and who is generous only when being so does not affect his own power or safety. There is plenty of evidence in the text that can be interpreted either way. Here is the point at which long-term politics, which helps students understand the characters who oppose Hal and which explains many of Hal's words and actions, merely helps to clarify the issues concerning Hal. That is because in Hal the play goes beyond long-term politics working itself out to produce England as England in the 1590's wanted to see itself. Instead, it becomes a play about a young man who is not merely a static entity produced by the Immanent Will to fit a political morality play, but a young man living through the process of learning to deal with those who make demands on him as he learns to manage power and majesty.

Falstaff is the test case by which to show this to students. If the play is to be understood as a morality play about long-term politics, then Falstaff must be a part of long-term politics, a figure to be explained by history. But when so explained, Falstaff becomes merely a representation of "merrie Englande," which even in the 1590's was thought to be long gone. Because he is so much more than this, the play is not merely a political morality. Old, fat, witty, a great drinker without drunkenness, he is a coward on instinct who is brave enough to fall asleep behind a thin curtain when the sheriff and his hanging party come looking for him, an ex-soldier too poor to buy shirts without borrowing money to pay for them, and later a recruiting officer who misuses his powers in order to gain the money he spends on sack and sugar. On the battlefield

he carries sack in his pistol holder, avoids death by lying down and playing dead, then jumps up and claims to have killed the leader of the rebels. He puts honor, which Hotspur and Hal are eager to gain, into its place as a mere word. This does not sound like a character in a political morality play, unless it be modeled on Catch 22. No, Falstaff is much more than a character in a political morality play; his preference for sack over honor, his desire to get ahead without working, his refusal to take anything seriously, and even the age at which he still devotes himself to the pleasures of younger men show that he is something eternal in the human spirit, bigger than history or politics, something that Hal will have to deal with both as man and as King.

The way that Hal deals with Falstaff, not only in Henry IV Part I but also in Henry IV Part II, reveals both his success and failure as a morally responsible human being who is also a morally responsible king. Of course Hal rejects Falstaff; that is implicit in their first words to each other. When Falstaff asks for the time of day, Hal replies, "What a devil hast thou to do with the time of day?" (I. ii. 2). The implication is that the older man has nothing to do with time. At the end of the scene Hal says that his own function in the play is to redeem time. Thus the one is concerned with history and must act in it as man and eventually as king, while the other is outside history. The final rejection, which occurs at the end of Henry IV Part II when Hal becomes King Henry V, is as ambiguous as the rest of Hal's actions. There Hal banishes Falstaff from his company while allowing him enough money to live on and promising that he will reconsider if Falstaff will reform. How can Hal banish this old friend who cannot live witout his company, and how can King Henry V keep this corrupt and corrupting old man near him? This ambiguity is not in Hal, it is Hal. He was made this way. One can only face this and the other ambiguities and respond to them. Classroom responses range from the wish that Hal had been capable of betraying his country before leaving his friend, to the justification of Hal's behavior on the grounds that he had a job to do as king and that it would hurt his job rating if he consorted with Falstaff or gave him a responsible position in the family firm. Most students, I find, justify Hal. Perhaps they are looking forward to the day when they, too—all of them—will become King. In any case, their understanding of the issues through which the young man on the stage and in the text must proceed as he learns to manage power and the demands made upon it begins with, and is achieved largely through, an understanding of the long-term politics in Henry IV Part I.

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TRYING HAMLET — LITERALLY

by
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One of my most successful Shakespearean strategies sprang from a student's question about Hamlet: "What would have happened to him if he were to appear in a current court of law?" The more we speculated about the possible consequences, the more intrigued we became. The result (but not the resolution by any means!) was the set of laws to be applied in The State of Mentis v. Hamlet.

The first time this case was used, students wrote a 90-minute semester exam essay. They were given the laws in advance and were encouraged to prepare notes and to bring any books they desired to the examination room. Students became so intrigued that they went to the library to do more reading and research. Parents were enthusiastic, too, since students discussed the problem with them and sought their reactions.

Results were uneven, but at times the analyses and persuasion achieved a dialectical performance level which was most gratifying, and reading that set of semester exam books was a very enjoyable experience. Although I assessed the grade, a law student read their exams and made many positive comments, much to the students' surprise and delight.

Lest I commit perjury, let me admit that an attempt to hold a trial based on these same laws was not so successful. Students portrayed all facets of a courtroom scene: judge, prosecutor, defense attorney, witnesses, and jury. Impassioned testimony provoked pandemonium among all participants, and the teacher-baliff had difficulty restoring order to the class-courtroom.

This heinous experience inspired several modifications. For one thing, the next time a trial is held, someone from the legal profession will be invited to serve as judge. Inasmuch as it is desirable for students to acquire some familiarity with courtroom procedures and etiquette, an attorney will be invited to act as judge. Since legal rules of evidence are complicated, the attorney-judge must not require unnecessarily strict adherence to the high level he must follow in real life. The object is for the judge to maintain control of the proceedings.

A second modification is to investigate the possibility of holding the trial in an actual courtroom. This field experience could also include a tour of all the various court offices and short summaries of the different jobs in the court system.

Yet another modification is to have the entire class submit written briefs. Again, the requirement is not to adhere to a formal judicial procedure but to create persuasive essays. The best two prosecuting briefs and the best two defensive briefs in the class will present oral arguments. An outside authority or authorities could adjudicate.

For a teacher with more than one class covering this same material, the videotape of the in-class arguments could be shown in another class. This distancing would offer a greater opportunity for impartiality as the jurors could then be sequestered in the classroom. The teacher then would be the jury foreman whose duty it is to keep the jury on task as it deliberates and tries to reach a unanimous decision.

This plan deviates from a real-life experience in many ways; most importantly, actual jurors are not permitted access to transcripts of the testimony. Students would have access to the script of the play. Although all testimony in an actual situation must be merely remembered by the jury, real-life jurors would be permitted to refer to written laws under certain conditions. The laws of Mentis have been adapted from many sources: California Penal Code, New York Penal Law, the Proposed Federal Criminal Code, the Modern Penal Code, and Ohio Revised Code.

In conclusion, your Honors, I hope you will not judge me in contempt for suggesting that the idea of trying Hamlet literally "is not strain'd,/It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven/Upon the place beneath; it is twice blest;/It blesseth him that gives and him that takes." (Merchant of Venice IV, I, 186-189)

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APPLICABLE CRIMINAL CODE: STATE OF MENTIS

Any sort of murder is homocide that is done with malice and aforethought. Murder in the first degree is perpetrated by means of a destructive device or explosive, poison, lying in wait, torture, or by any other kind of willful, deliberate, and premeditated killing, or which is committed in the perpetration of, or attempt to perpetrate, arson, rape, robbery, burglary, mayhem, or any other such act.

Killing by torture requires proof of intent to inflict pain and suffering for purposes of revenge, humiliation, or some similar motive, and a causal relationship between the torture and the death of a victim.

Murder of the second degree is any unlawful killing of a human being that is done with malice aforethought.

The defendant may be guilty of unlawful killing of a human being but without malice. In that case, he may be guilty of one of two degrees of manslaughter.

A killing that would otherwise be a murder but that was committed in response to adequate provocation and is committed without malice aforethought is voluntary manslaughter. The provocation must be such as might make ordinary persons of average disposition liable to act rashly without deliberation, and from passion rather than from judgement. The reasonableness of the disturbance which reduces a killing to manslaughter is to be determined from the viewpoint of a person in the defendant's position under the circumstances as the defendant believed them to be. Words, no matter how insulting, are not adequate provocation.

If two persons voluntarily engage in a fight, in the course of which one is killed, the homicide is only manslaughter. The suddenness of the affray, rather than any specific action by the victim, is the provocation. However, while it is not

controlling which person struck the first blow, the killing may not be reduced to manslaughter if at the beginning of the fight the defendant was under an unfair advantage.

A killing should be reduced to manslaughter so long as the defendant reasonably believed that a situation existed constituting adequate provocation. In other words, if he were mistaken as to the existence of the provocation but his mistaken belief was a reasonable one, the killing should be mitigated.

If the defendant intended to kill the provoking party but killed someone else, either through accident or because he was mistaken as to who had provoked him, the killing is still only voluntary manslaughter.

However, if the defendant intends to kill someone believed not to be the person who provoked him, the killing is not reduced to manslaughter. Thus, even if there is adequate provocation, a homicide is murder where the defendant is so enraged that he simply strikes out at some innocent party.

Homicide is not manslaughter if between the provocation and the killing there elapses sufficient time to enable the passions of a reasonable person to cool. It is irrelevant that despite the passage of tima the defendant himself did not in fact cool off. It is possible that although an adequate cooling period has passed, intervening events may have reminded the accused of the provoking event and reinflamed his passions.

An unintended killing is involuntary manslaughter if it is caused during the commission of an unlawful act not amounting to a felony or it if is the result of criminal negligence. Defendant must have been aware of the risk of death, but it is sufficient that a reasonable person would have been aware that the situation created such a risk.

The accused may also be found guilty of various degrees of homicide, the killing of one human being by another human being. Justified homicides are those killings commanded or authorized by law. Excusable homicides are those in which the killer is not necessarily without fault but where circumstances do not justify infliction of the normal punishment for homicide. One engaged in legitimate self-defense who accidentally kills the aggressor commits excusable homicide. A killing is excusable if it occurs in the course of a sudden mutual fight in order to save oneself from a reasonable apparent danger of death or great bodily harm.

Not guilty by reason of insanity means that the accused committed a homicide but did not have the mental capability to determine the difference between right and wrong. Accused would be suffering from a mental disease or serious mental defect.

Finally, it is possible that the accused is not guilty and should be acquitted because he did not kill.

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To Sport Would Be As Tedious As To Work

by
Sherry Bevins Darrell

Although, like most teachers, I continue to tinker with my Shakespeare course (This year shall I include Measure for Measure? Shall I drop Troilus and Cressida to fit in All's Well? Should I end the course with The Tempest or Henry VIII?), nevertheless, I have found some assignments which work especially well because they teach and delight.

I teach at a young, public university of 4,000 students with only about 50 English majors for whom Shakespeare is the only required upper-level literature course. Because most students in Shakespeare are majors--most of them plan to teach in public schools, or attend graduate school in English or business, or enter law school--I try to address through assignments their need to read carefully and thoroughly, to write precisely, to do substantial research, to learn to trust their own judgments once they become good readers and writers. Thus, in addition to our reading and discussing about fifteen plays, I use the following assignments to meet those student needs.

Quizzes and Exams

At the first class meeting, I notify students of a quiz the next period on all of Maurice Charney's How to Read Shakespeare, an excellent introduction to reading the plays. Once students understand gestural language, uses of soliloquies, stage conventions, and so forth, they can read the plays with better understanding and imagination. My Charney quiz is objective--usually quadruple matching, true-false, fill-in-the-blank; it covers everything in the book, and students know they must understand Charney to pass the quiz.

Also, in this course students write three examinations: two hourlies and a two-hour final. On each exam students identify quotations by play and speaker (80 percent of the exam) and write an essay (20 percent). By testing through quotations, I intend students to know the plays and know them well--not just general ideas. The essay question allows me to ask about connections, development, larger thematic concerns. But essays count only 20 percent because I do not want generalizations to supersede students' knowing the plays thoroughly. I include the essay question, however, to remind students about the need to synthesize and express ideas quickly and accurately.

Oral Assignments

In this course students memorize 200 lines of Shakespeare, and their memory work must come from at least four different plays--they can't learn a lot of Hamlet, for instance, and know nothing about, say, 1 Henry IV. They recite lines in my office, a minimum of 40 lines per visit; and they must recite letter perfect, with expression appropriate to the speech in its context; in other words, they must stand upon points. Although a few students hate the idea of recitation at first, they love doing it and having it done. The lines stay with them.

Moreover, each student offers an 8-minute oral analysis on a section or topic of one play. These analyses occur at the beginning of class--to open a play for discussion. When the semester begins, I provide a list of options, and students sign for analyses. For example, one student may analyze--for 8 minutes--A Midsummer Night's Dream in terms of Act 1, scene 1 and Theseus's opening speech in Act V. Another may analyze Troilus and Cressida in terms of images and symbols. Yet another may sign for the structure of The Winter's Tale. To present the oral analysis, students may bring to class one note card filled with notes; they may not bring a prepared text and read from it. Their task is to analyze the assigned scene or topic and enlarge from it--what does the scene mean for the entire play--and thereby open discussion.

During this analysis, other students take notes; and, at the end of class, they write a one-paragraph evaluation of the analysis and its effectiveness in generating class discussion. I collect these evaluations, type them (to provide anonymity), add my own evaluation and a grade, and give them to the analyst at the next class meeting.

Written Assignments

Students prepare three written assignments, each with a different purpose, all requiring substantial critical thinking and good writing.

Philological Essay. A philological essay, due about one month into the course, addresses Shakespeare's language and helps students become aware of recurrent key words. During the second week of class, students sign for topics, then begin their work with the Shakespeare Lexicon, the Concordance, the OED, and any other lexical materials they think may help. For this paper, which runs 6 to 8 pages, they may not use secondary, critical materials--except that I place on reserve for them a copy of Richard Altick's excellent philological essay on Richard II. I list on the assignment sheet about thirty important words in Shakespeare's plays and set three plays opposite each word. When a student signs for a word, he must choose which play to work with from among those three options. For instance, a student may sign for blood and choose from Richard II, Richard III,

and Coriolanus. Another student may sign for nothing and choose from King Lear, The Winter's Tale, and Richard II; another may write on reason in Hamlet, The Tempest, or 2 Henry IV. This assignment forces students to become familiar with lexical materials and to master basics of philological study--to come to understand the importance of words in Shakespeare and their implications for understanding a play.

Close Reading. The second writing assignment, due about two months into the course, is a close reading of a 25- to 30-line passage. Students may choose their own passages (often I offer suggestions), bu I must approve the passages to be sure they select rich, significant ones. In that essay students examine the passage from every possible angle--try to see everything happening in it: tone and tone shifts; irony; prosody; imagery and symbolism; character revelation; theme--how this passage indicates and contributes to major ideas in the play; structure--how the passage functions in the movement and direction of the play. These papers may not exceed 20 pages, not counting prosody worksheets. Again, I ask that students not use secondary, critical materials in these close readings; I want to see their own work, their own interpretations.

Critical-Reading Report. The final assignment, due the week before finals, requires that students work with secondary materials. No only do I want them to become familiar with major and minor critics publishing in Shakespeare studies, and with indices and periodicals and books including Shakespeare criticism, but also I want them to learn to judge critical essays as carefully as they judge primary texts. From my own experience, I know that undergraduates (and often graduate students) distrust their own interpretations and believe almost anything written and published--the wishy-washy syndrome: if it's in print, it must be true and good. (They read one essay and think it absolutely right about a topic; they read an essay with an opposite view and think it right; whatever they read last is usually what they believe--they thoroughly distrust their own good sense). This assignment asks them to become discriminating.

Students choose a play, read it, and then compile a bibliography of at least ten essays interpreting that play. (I check these bibliographies for variety and coverage.) Then they read the essays and write a one-page report on each. The first sentence of the report states the critic's argument. The paragraph following summarizes the critic's argument. The next paragraph or two evaluate the argument and place it (does it belong to a particular school--Freudian, Marxist, feminist, structuralist, and so on?).

After spending one page per critical essay, each student then writes one more page addressing these questions: What article helped you most to understand the play and why? Which article seemed narrowest, least helpful and why? Which article most closely expressed your own original understanding of the play?

Does that article still illuminate the play best for you? What have you learned about various kinds of critical approaches?

This assignment helps students learn to judge criticism: to spot writers with bones to pick who mangle Shakespeare to fit their own points of view; to become familiar with sensible, helpful critics--Heilman, Rossiter, Brooks, Muir, Mack, Booth. Furthermore, when students read superior critics, they see the value of good, clear writing and of humor in literary criticism.

(The worst critics write obscurely, abstractly, without a whit of wit.) Thus, students see that some Shakespeare critics learned from Shakespeare that one can write about profound ideas with clarity and humor.

One last note, I require that the oral analysis, the philological essay, the close reading, and the critical-reading reports address four different plays for each student; again, students must know well more than one play.

Though, of course, everyone's course differs from my own, I know these assignments help students. If some tasks look exceptionally difficult, they are not really forbidding to upper-level students.

Naturally, we do other things in class and out. We see a movie of a Shakespeare play by visiting the film interpretation class: Kurosawa's Throne of Blood (Macbeth) or Olivier's Richard III or Zefferelli's Romeo and Juliet. In addition, this spring we will rent three videotapes of the BBC Shakespeare series for students to see on their own time in the Media Services Center (I can't afford class time for films).

We work hard, all of us. Yet, though students complain all semester about the workload in this course, afterwards many call it their best college course--because it was the most difficult, and because they came to know Shakespeare. For all of us the work creates the holiday--learning Shakespeare.

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SYLLABUS TO INDEPENDENCE

by
Ruth Ann Gerrard

Doubly blessed in education and teaching position, I have had the opportunity to write my master's thesis on Shakespeare's Histories and then to teach the Bard and his works in a senior elective every year since 1971. But the roots of my enthusiasm are even deeper: a childhood interest in British royalty and exposure to Lamb's Tales, high school teachers who guided us through Caesar and MacBeth, college professors who opened great vistas into analysis and criticism; with an outstanding master's advisor whose expertise lay in the Renaissance, Shakespeare was a natural culmination to my English specialization. Through all of this my mentors had encouraged a spirit of research and involvement that engendered an inquisitive enthusiasm in me; in the spirit of academic honesty I've wanted to pass this on to my students. As I begin yet another year of teaching Shakespeare, my prime objective has been and is that each student be able to independently read and enjoy any Shakespearean play.

Trying to realize this ambitious project within a nine week framework requires thoughtful time management. Remembering the logical idea evolution achieved by chronology of composition in my graduate level Shakespeare course, I, too, have moved from Richard III to Richard II to Hamlet with the class—followed, normally, by Lear or Othello read independently. This, in turn, is reinforced by background lectures, handouts, slides, and references; the seminar/discussion method; and Folger and Signet texts. Each of the forty-five class hours is packed with information and idea exchanges.

To start my student toward Richard III, I lecture not only on the Histories, but also on the genealogy. Armed with my personal outline handouts, I cover the times of the Bard, the reasons for writing the Histories, the effects of reading them in chronology of composition and/or historical sequence. Originally, I had planned only a brief genealogical investigation to orient them to Shakespeare's own rulers and their relevant predecessors. Student questions and interest have turned this into a very full examination of the last Plantagenet, Lancastrians, Yorkists, Tudors, and early Stuarts with a few glances at the House of Windsor for clarification of titles and media reports.

While they are beginning to read, I gain a little time to show my personal slides of Shakespearean and British historical sites that relate to the course and stimulate interest. Their reading, meanwhile, is in the Folger Library editions that are wonderfully supportive in explanatory notes and scene summaries. Because our school librarians have been most generous in developing our reference shelves, some students begin to check a few basic points in the wide range of biographical, historical, and critical works we possess.

Although they've struggled with language, they're invariably prepared by having read the first act at least once by the beginning of the second week. Each day I begin

with one question: What questions do you have from your reading? With optimal fortune we will be busy for the entire hour with questions, answers, comments, and admittedly —a few digressions. If the students seem reticent or confused, I will pose a few questions and I always make certain that we cover all major points. But I try very hard to avoid line by line interpretation and instruction that seems to create an early, unbreakable dependency.

Because I believe that struggle—within reason—produces greater knowledge and understanding, I deliberately let my students work their way through Richard III encouraging them by words, Folger aids, the handouts. Time after time the students are engrossed in the machinations of Richard and asking quite interesting questions by Act III or IV.

Free to tell my students now that they've mastered a relatively easy, yet very long, play, I lead them to Richard II with a reading guide and an overview of the evolution of Shakespeare in poetic, linguistic growth and character development. In this play we can concentrate upon language, techniques, and themes, the beginnings of artistic appreciation.

Believing that comedies are better viewed than read, I tell my students of the mature Comedies, later Histories, and early Tragedies. Giving them a list of important considerations in Hamlet I ask them to read the play independently over the next two weeks while we spend time with project and audio-visual materials on Hamlet.

The projects have been lurking in the background since the beginning of the course. The reference shelf, informal class discussions, and personal conferences have led most students to an early commitment on projects. Each is required to give a fifteen minute presentation, alone or in conjunction with a maximum of three other students. Presentations have ranged from individual book reviews of critical works; monarchy studies; surveys of British historical sites; analyses of heraldry, foods, customs, clothing; Shakespearean biography, theater; Stratford and its influences. In an intense week of sharing we may spend time listening to four young ladies sing Renaissance songs; two boys trace a major battle of the Wars of the Roses complete with relief maps and miniature soldiers; a review of E.M.W. Tillyard's Elizabethan World Picture; a description of the Windsor Castle of Shakespeare's times complemented by a floor plan poster and cardboard Round Tower model; a cutting from Romeo and Juliet with memorized lines and reasonably believable costumes and sets. At the end of the week we've gained in our knowledge, appreciation, and enthusiasm—a student-oriented one week "crash course" in the Bard and his times.

Now that my maturing students have independently read Hamlet, we're ready to talk. Using the first two Encyclopaedia Britannica films as a base—"The Age of Elizabeth" and "What Happens in Hamlet"—we're comfortable enough with theater and plot to look at the issues: the microcosm of Denmark, the power of royalty, the mental state of Hamlet, the Renaissance man, appearance vs. reality, characterization, image-themes, magnificent soliloquies, intricacies of plot. We can truly discuss—with Shakespeare's Hamlet—the reasons for man's existence: the craft of the Bard; the power of reason; representative, accomplished man as the finest creation.

At this point my students are ready to put their acquired Shakespearean talents to paper. From my early days of teaching King Lear as a class play and requiring a paper comparing it to an earlier play, I've evolved to a series of options and plays that foster both interest and independence. Students are still required to read either Lear or Othello on their own. From there they may write papers comparing some facet of one of these plays to another of the class plays or modern situations. Another very

popular direction is taking reading notes while working through the play—not plot summaries, but reactions, comparisons, questions. Frequently, there are frustrations with Othello's myopia in managing his life or observations of Iago's similarities to Richard III. Complementing the reading note otion is required examination and summarizing of a variety of critical articles. Recently, as a challenge to quite sophisticated students, I've added Henry IV, 1 and Tempest in Signet editions. They are asked to read the play, a difficult critical article from the book, and evaluate the critic's interpretation in light of their own understanding. Mathematically, I haven't tallied the possible number of options; but, in reality, I've been delighted with perceptive papers on Lear, quizzical commentaries on both plays, rare insights into the mature Bard.

Known in my school for my essay exams, I try to pull together the nine weeks in challenging questions. Favorites center upon either Shakespeare as a representative of his country and/or times or tracing the development of the Bard in an area such as characterization or imagery. The ability to see the total picture gives me a perspective on their growth and forces them to see the evolution of the playwright.

Beginning my fifteenth year I'm still excited about teaching Shakespeare. The teacher next door tells me she hears the lilt in my voice when I'm teaching the Bard; my students mention, with good humor, my obvious enthusiasm. But the real rewards for me and my students are the ones who are reading extra plays in the summer, attending performances independently, watching the BBC series, buying their own copies, even traveling to the Folger and Stratford. That's independence!

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FOCUS ON SHAKESPEARE:

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARYE KESSLAR

by
Sharon Patrick

Marye Kesslar, a central figure in SOCTE's activities based on Shakespeare almost ten years ago, responded recently to questions about those activities and the teaching of Shakespeare. Mrs. Kesslar chaired the 1976 spring conference in Zanesville; coordinated a trip to Stratford, Ontario; and guided a tour to England. She has taught English in Columbus and Zanesville at the high school and college level for 32 years. Mrs. Kesslar retired in 1976, but she continues teaching part-time at Ohio University-Zanesville.

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Q: What are your earliest memories of Shakespeare?

A. I was lucky enough to be born in Columbus and to be young there when repertory and summer stock companies played the Hartman Theater and later when the Theater Guild brought New York productions with the original casts. During my junior year at West High School, my English teacher urged the class to attend a performance of one of the Shakespearean plays we were studying, and I dutifully climbed to the Hartman gallery to see my first play by Shakespeare, The Merchant of Venice. At Ohio State University Dr. Andrews, my drama professor, made sure the class went to the plays: he ordered the tickets for us. By the time I began to teach at East High School, I was so conditioned that I arranged for my junior students to see Macbeth with Maurice Evans and Judith Anderson. Several years after that I took my classes to attend one of the all-time great performances of Othello starring Paul Robson in the title role and Jose Ferrer as Iago. Those were the halcyon days, and we were hooked.

Q. What do you recall about the SOCTE Shakespeare Conference and the SOCTE tours to Canada and England?

A. The SOCTE spring meeting in 1976 was an inspired conference held at Elson Hall, Zanesville, on April 23 (Shakespeare's birthday) and April 24. For the Friday afternoon and Saturday morning meetings James Davis asked Samuel Crowl, Ernest Johanesson, and Edward Quattrocki from the Department of English Language and Literature, Ohio University-Athens, to join him in a review of the three plays we were to attend in Stratford, Canada, June 10-13, and in a discussion of effective classroom methods for teaching Shakespeare. Joy Miller of Circleville and Fritz Enstrom of Caldwell read papers describing the strategies they used to entice students to read and to enjoy the plays. On Friday night we celebrated the birthday at a dinner in Herrold Hall, presided over by George Ware and followed by the Peter Hall film of A Midsummer Night's Dream. At the Saturday luncheon William Glover, visiting

Shakespearean actor in Athens, told about his acting experiences at the three Stratfords in England, Canada, and the United States (Conneticut). I must add that, in spite of the tremendous amount of work involved, I remember those two days with pleasure and still feel grateful to those who helped to make the conference more than a springtime dream.

Since Shakespeare wrote the plays to be seen, the tour to Canada in June was a natural follow-up to the conference. Both tours, to Canada in 1976 and to England in 1978, gave students and teachers (many for the first time) an opportunity to see professional performances and productions. Members of both tours were thrilled, so much so that some returned to Canada and England in following years. Shakespeare was a hit!

Q: What "good" came from these tours? How important are these kinds of activities for teachers of Shakespeare, of English literature, or of English in general?

A: The Canadian tour encouraged those fortunate ones who went to attend other Shakespearean performances whenever the opportunity arose. Tour members soon learned, however, that, although they enjoyed the visual magic of the plays, they could follow the poetic language and hence the characterizations and themes only through careful reading and study. Students said repeatedly that nothing in their English studies had impressed them as much as traveling to Canada to see live theater, but they also admitted that studying the plays beforehand had made that enjoyment possible.

Teachers on tour to England had a new look at Shakespeare the Man by visiting his Henley Street home, Anne Hathaway's cottage, and the burial site at the altar of Trinity Church in Stratford. The highlight of this overnight stop, of course, was attending the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of The Tempest with Michael Hordern as Prospero (and followed later in London's Regent's Park by a stunning outdoor performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream). Tour members also visited the homes of Thomas Hardy, Jane Austen, William Wordsworth, Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Emily and Charlotte Bronte, and George Bernard Shaw. There is nothing more appropriate for a literature teacher than a walk through a writer's home to feel his presence and to see some of his personal belongings: his favorite chair, his spectacles on a desk, or a manuscript in his very own handwriting (sometimes barely legible). Who can deny that such summer activities are "good" for the teacher's sagging end-of-the-year enthusiasm?

Q: What do you emphasize in the teaching of Shakespeare? Do you think this emphasis has changed over the years?

A: For high school and college students reading and studying Shakespeare for the first time, the emphasis should be on plot first although to cut through archaic language, poetic figures, allusions, and soliloquies to reach that plot is as laborious as hunting for diamonds in a deep vein. The process requires time and patience, but if students and teachers persevere, they can extract the happenings of the play from which characterizations and themes develop automatically.

The opening scenes reveal, for example, that the title character in Hamlet contemplates suicide because he cannot cope with the thought of Claudius's usurpation of power after his father's death. While he is deciding whether to "end The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is heir to" or put on an "antic disposition" to catch the king or act rashly or strike with premeditation, Shakespeare begins to insert small ideas here and there; they are related subordinately to the main plot but

are important enough to merit class discussion and later a written lesson. Students are fascinated by these sub-themes, and, knowing the plot, they can connect them to the play and to their own lives. They will find a relevance in understanding the uselessness of mourning, the self-serving advice for succeeding in society, the "vicious mole of nature" found in the best of men, the danger involved in spying, the vicissitudes of love, the aura surrounding kings, the futility of war, and the questions of immortality. All this and more in this plot.

Another emphasis, as time permits, might be the play's stage business. What are the actors doing as they say their lines, and what are the other actors doing as they listen? Students must imagine gestures, facial expressions, movements about the stage, and voice inflections. After studying a play, we spend several class sessions seeing the BBC tapes, and students are surprised to find that costumes, acting, and stage props contribute immeasurably to the written word. This last is especially true of those who have never seen a professional production or who lack imagination.

Q: Has the emphasis changed?

A: Yes, in one way in particular. Now we read the text more closely, knowing that the playwright is the only authority for the meaning of the play. As the interpretations and criticisms appear, a study of the text is necessary to determine if indeed there is incest or existentialism in Hamlet, if Cordelia's death is unjust, if the plot of Othello is so compressed that the themes of jealousy and "motiveless malignity" are too manipulated to be valid, if imagery contributes to a play's effectiveness, etc. When a student volunteers an unusual interpretation (oh, happy day!), we go to the text to see whether the lines will support it. That is why the students must read the play and not rely on plot condensations. Our text, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Third Edition, edited by David Bevington, includes a review of the soundest criticism and shifts in emphasis since Shakespeare's day, and if necessary, I can refer a questioning student to that section. Much of this scholarship is not pertinent to a beginning study of Shakespeare, but I never like to let a student down.

Q: What problems do you encounter in the teaching of Shakespeare? How do you overcome these problems (such as reluctance to read)?

A: After first-day class business and a brief review of Shakespeare's life and times, I begin by reading a few opening scenes from the first of our four plays (Macbeth for the tragedies and A Midsummer Night's Dream for the comedies) to introduce the characters ("What funny names!"), setting, and poetry. I do not ask the students to read aloud the first day, but I do explain that they must read each play before we begin to discuss it. Then as a postscript I throw in the gaurded threat, "I know you are busy with other classes and your job, but you must read these four plays and come to class if you want a passing grade," at the same time reminding them of quizzes, midterms, finals, and papers. I hate to do this, but I think we should know where we stand. Besides, I know from past experience that most students will put off reading or make excuses: reading Shakespeare is laborious and time-consuming, at least at first. Some decide that reading the condensed plots in Cliff's Notes or Monarch Guide will suffice. I pray they will discover early on that there is more to reading a play than a cursory skimming. I do not object to any help a student can get (as long as it isn't plagiarism), but he must understand there is no substitute for reading the play as Shakespeare wrote it. I add that he can help himself by referring to footnotes and rereading difficult passages (he would rather go over Niagara Falls in a barrel any day).

Since I never teach a class twice the same way or reuse tests, it is difficult for the canniest student to escape the reading and still pass the course. Even then, with careful reading the students need all the help I can give them. I hand out guide sheets for each play, hoping to coax them to think beyond the plot; I pass around old programs, pictures, reviews, and maps of England and give each one a bibliography of books available in the OUZ library—anything to bring a gleam to the eye and a few questions to the lips. I am gambling with the TV, the telephone, the record player, job, dates, sleep, and the refrigerator, and much of the time the deck is stacked against me.

When students eventually overcome their reluctance to reading aloud, they will agree to appear in scenes of their own choosing before the class, sometimes even committing the lines to memory or performing solo. Most of the time we work through the plays together, discussing and reading selected passages and scenes, and listening to records and viewing tapes. If a play happens to be showing here or in New Concord or Athens, I make arrangements for them to attend. At the end of the quarter there will be some good papers and some that are adequate but uninspired. I am generally satisfied with results, and I tell the students so. I know a few may never read another line of Shakespeare, but I applaud them, too, for having the courage to suffer it through.

Q: What plays do you find most relevant to students or most accepted? What plays are most "teachable"?

A: Of the great tragedies I think students consider Hamlet most relevant because they, too, have been deceived by the difference between reality and appearance: the awful truth "that one may smile and smile and be a villain" in this "unweeded garden," the world. Twelfth Night is a relevant comedy because students find the disguises of Viola, Malvolio, and Feste visual proof that women and men are not always what they seem. Students of either sex can empathize with the plights of Desdemona, Ophelia, Juliet, and Cordelia, especially if they have suffered from authoritarian parents or spouses. There are relevant characters and plots for all ages in most of the plays.

Most students have little trouble accepting unnatural plots and characters if they will "suspend disbelief," as proposed by Coleridge. Teachers usually find the mature plays more acceptable and "teachable" than the early plays when Shakespeare was learning his craft. Even The Winter's Tale, a curious play with a divided plot, and Measure for Measure, a dark, lustful comedy of seeming and being, with their respective themes of jealousy and harassment, have student followers. Success with any of the plays depends on how well teachers and students prepare. Neither can hide poor preparation, the shortest route to an unteachable play.

Q: What advice and suggestions do you give to the teacher of Shakespeare in the classroom today?

A: I have no advice, only a suggestion. I would tell any teacher of Shakespeare, who has not already done so, to learn as much as possible about Shakespeare, his times, and his plays by reading not only the plays but also what reputable critics have to say about them. If you need extra credit enroll in a Shakespearean class. Otherwise, any good text will provide a bibliography and any good library will have a selection of the books on hand. How about trying E. K. Chambers, Hardin Craig, L. C. Knight, E. M. W. Tillyard, Caroline Spurgeon, E. E. Stoll, Mark Van Doren, Harley Granville-Barker, Northrop Frye, or J. Dover Wilson for starters? Attend any professional productions that come your way, and if you are ever in Washington D. C., make a special effort to

go to the Folger Shakespeare Library, the resting place for more Folio editions of the collected works (from 1623 on) than England owns. You may even be lucky enough to see a play there on stage of an exact reproduction of an Elizabethan theater. Finally, saturate yourself with Shakespearean knowledge so that when you teach a play, your students will know you as an authority. (I wish I had always practiced what I am preaching.)

Q: Do you have any other comments about Shakespeare?

A: The best way to teach Shakespearean plays is with enthusiasm and a sense of humor. Students react immediately, and they have a good time, too.

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Chillicothe High School
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LESSON NUMBER ONE

by
April Kotouch

Nodding in deference to an absurd hour of morning, an act not unfamiliar to many of my teaching colleagues, I was on my way. From the backseat of a Chrysler tunneling through the fog of a fall sunrise, it was difficult to tell where my way would lead. As an exploratory graduate student being chauffeured to my first teacher's conference (by the O.U. English Education Department's Chairman, no less), I knew only one thing: the day ahead would be filled with serious scrutiny of the "ways and means" of fellow lantern-bearers on this route marked "education."

The first of the day's revelations came with my observation of the dire arthritic pain being suffered by the Chairman's wife, a high school English instructor. As I sat, stifled, in compassionate inability to ease her suffering, I realized what a shock it was to feel sympathy for one who dwelled in, and imparted wisdom from, a realm of existence clearly beyond that of an ingnorant graduate student. Suddenly, the sky filled with light, and it dawned upon me: teachers are human beings! The notion was comforting (although I regretted its means of acquisition), not only to April, the student, but to Miss Kotouch, the first year teaching assistant. So often, the expectations and rivalries of a pedagogical profession seem to force the people behind the pedagogy into hiding. I must say, there's a certain delight, and necessity, in hearing an honest groan once in a while.

Appropriately, of course, the groaning stopped once our Athens caravan reached Portsmouth, and the order of the day commenced. While I watched the woman whom I knew to be under extreme duress stand and address the S.O.C.T.E. members with grace, note number two imprinted itself in my mind: teachers are brave souls! I found myself wanting to interject on the speaker's behalf, alerting the audience to her unacknowledged disadvantage, but there was no need. She was managing quite well, thank you, exemplifying the bravado characteristic of a leader of developing spirits, a.k.a. high school seniors. Whether or not it is just, any individual whose career involves standing in a classroom as the focal point for youthful eyes is handed a figurative badge of authority and expected to impart guidance, often through behavior as well as words. Mere knowledge cannot, it seems, stand as the sole product of teaching; personality serves as a conduit through which knowledge must pass as it is conveyed to learners. The burden of such a weight is heavier than that imposed by many other professions. Thus, teachers must be brave—not because they must meet oft-conceived prerequisites for "paragons of virtue," but because any deviation from the exemplary conduct of teachers by society is likely to be challenged. Only a strong soul can successfully slip from under the thumb of such a critical offense.

Ironically, although teachers must face the demands of tradition, the representatives I encountered as the day progressed formed a not-so-traditional set. Accordingly, my mental outline continued: teachers are a broad-minded bunch! Within conservative boundaries established by administrative policies and professional strata,

teachers may look innocuous; but every educator I met at the conference managed a great deal of individuality through definitive personal conviction and challenging progressive thinking. In fact, the viewpoints presented were not only distinctive when considered individually, but extremely diverse when considered in compendium. I found no horn-rimmed spectacles hiding behind book bindings among this communicative crowd, I assure you! It is only proper, I think, that those who devote their lives to the impartation of growth-inducing ideas should themselves have active and vital minds—and these there were in Portsmouth, in abundance. The energy radiated almost visibly from one to another and back again, in alternating currents of suggestions given and advice received, most eagerly. The teachers proved to be among the most attentive learners I have yet encountered! Due recognition was given to all perspectives, including my own, though I speak with a voice young and inexperienced in the educative world.

At the risk of being trite (one of the privileges afforded innocent newcomers in any field), let me say that my voice changed as the day progressed. Along with my aforementioned optimistic impressions, I gradually came to perceive an under-lying, deeper tone in the utterances of those around me. Barely distinguishable as it was, I deliberated long before I was able to articulate just what lent such gravity to their words. A somber hint of Roman numeral IV in my outline lurked beneath the spoken surface, and, finally, it wrote itself in capital letters: teachers are, inevitably, FRUSTRATED! Although my first reaction, after such a realization, was to attribute the frustration I sensed to qualms about career choice—desires to be where these teachers were not—I was quickly enlightened by a fellow teaching assistant. He elucidated an alternate view—the possibility that existent frustrations stemmed from an entirely different root. I now hold fast to the supposition that teachers are invariably frustrated because the very nature of their jobs precludes strict, tangible measure of their effectiveness. Scientists, so prevalent in our technological age, can <u>prove</u> correct formulae, mathematicians can find <u>undeniable</u> solutions to difficult equations, attorneys can solidly win or incontestably lose a case; but the wins and losses, the successes and failures of <u>training minds to think</u> are not so easily delineated. In fact, teaching goes far beyond mere fact, venturing into the insubstantive realm of measuring the growth of human beings. The ultimate frustration is that, given a thing as priceless as a human mind, with perhaps unlimited potential, no amount of teacher-prompted growth <u>completes</u> the task of education. Thus, it is true that a teacher's work is never done.

Although it is not within my means to ease the oppression of this thought, I can say with the utmost sincerity that any group of people who can inadvertantly affect me so profoundly must be painfully powerful when they are guided by a purpose. Undoubtedly, "purpose" was the first word on the vocabulary lists of the inspiring and dedicated educators who taught me so much during "Lesson Number One," and, true to form, didn't even know it.

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